

A MAN FOR ALL AGES: THE CHANGING IMAGE OF BENJAMIN  
FRANKLIN  
IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN POPULAR LITERATURE

By

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School  
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Few persons have had an image with greater enduring power than Benjamin Franklin. This study focuses on the image of Franklin from his own carefully self-crafted public figure through subsequent nineteenth-century biographers and critics who refashion it to reflect prevalent attitudes and ideologies. Images range from a pious Christian to a mythicized, larger-than-life figure credited for almost every event in American colonial history. Emphasizing literature intended for children, the image of Franklin is traced through four distinct phases of the nineteenth century: Early (1800-1829), Mid-Century (1830-1859), Civil War and Post-Civil War (1860-1879), and Late (1880-1900).

Franklin's popularity persists through the century as writers selectively emphasize certain elements of his life (for instance, his rise from obscurity to fame and fortune) while suppressing more controversial behavior (his religious skepticism or "amorous intrigues"). Juvenile literature, a genre fully developed in the nineteenth century, grows more important to the changing image as representations of Franklin and his life story become the means of inculcating the rising generation with values and attitudes deemed most important. The selective refashioning of Franklin by Mason Weems and other early writers codifies crucial aspects of the figure, and prepares the way for later writers like Horatio Alger to bring

about a more complete transformation. The Franklin which early twentieth-century critics such as D. H. Lawrence reacted against and the image which still remains popular are largely a creation of the nineteenth century.

## INTRODUCTION

In America few individuals have elicited such varied reactions or been the subject of so many sustained studies as Benjamin Franklin. A leading figure of the eighteenth century, Franklin's life, work, and writings generated an interest in his own day which has continued through the succeeding two centuries. With a person who achieved that amount of fame and notoriety, it becomes a difficult task to determine the real man in the midst of all the myth and folklore that have accumulated. Few American myths have had such enduring power and generated so frequent a retelling as those relating to the early years of America and the individuals associated with the creation of the United States. The mythicized stories of Franklin and the founding fathers explain the origins of America and help to provide a sense of "Americanness" for the United States and its citizens.

Of the great mythic heroes of the Revolutionary era--the three most prominent being Washington, Franklin, and Jefferson--none has become such an emulative model as Benjamin Franklin. Franklin's life story, as the original American "boy who made good," suggests that anyone can rise to fame and fortune regardless of background or financial means. Additionally, Franklin, the gentleman and courtier before parliaments and kings, embodies civilized colonial life and loyalty to the United States. Perhaps no other man is invoked even today by so many groups: printers, merchants, Masons, politicians, diplomats, scientists, inventors, postmen, nutritionists, newspapermen, librarians, community service groups, religionists of every persuasion, and countless others (Wecter 52). In this study I look at some of the reasons for Franklin's popularity, review characteristics Franklin has come to represent, identify when Franklin began to be viewed

in legendary terms, and look at the trends present during the formative phases of the myth which transformed the historical figure into legend, reinforcing his mythic representations.

For the serious student or scholar trying to get at the real man, a study of Franklin's image and mythicizing becomes crucial. The early twentieth-century debunking of and reaction against Franklin came in large part from a rejection of the figure created by writers of the nineteenth-century. Any current appraisal of Franklin is complicated by both the larger-than-life image of the nineteenth century and the twentieth century's reaction to it.

Robert D. Miles in his article "The American Image of Benjamin Franklin" (one of the few studies which traces Franklin's image) states, "it is hard to imagine a matter more vital to the student of American civilization than an appreciation of the authentic Benjamin Franklin" (143). Though finding the "authentic" individual behind the convincing masks Franklin himself created and the images later writers presented may itself prove impossible, identifying the genesis of important aspects of his image can provide new perspectives on one of America's most representative men and reflect influential ideologies present in nineteenth-century American culture and society.

Various views of and attitudes towards Franklin, many inaccurate, have persisted since Franklin's own day. For instance, the commonly held notion that Franklin's reputation declined soon after his death has little support from existing documents. According to Melvin H. Buxbaum, author of the most current bibliography of Franklin material (1983), "Franklin apparently did not suffer any great loss of popularity at least among most of his fellow Americans or people abroad" (xiv). Through careful study of the evolving image of Franklin, we can begin to see more clearly what the man was, what he has come to represent, the accuracy of many characteristics and anecdotes attributed to him, and the foundation for attitudes many still hold about him.

The process of mythicizing began during the latter half of the eighteenth century in Franklin's own lifetime. Franklin himself acted as the first creator and perpetuator of his own legend. A commonly held notion during the eighteenth and nineteenth century,

epitomized by Emerson's *Representative Men* (1850), was that the spirit and genius of an historical age could be represented in a single person who could serve as a spokesman for that period. From his writings, Franklin appears aware of this notion of representativeness, acting as a model for his time as well as for generations to follow.

Mitchell Breitwieser suggests the following:

By offering an exemplary demonstration of the benefits of calculating self-government (and of the practical techniques that made it generally available), Franklin hoped to excite the human nature latent in his fellow men, leading them from the divisive passions of particular interest toward unanimous admiration for reason. (203)

Franklin seems extraordinarily cognizant of and attentive to his reputation, not in a vain self-aggrandizing way, but with a keen awareness of what he believed could be his exemplary function. Throughout his life we see Franklin consciously designing roles to fit what he perceived as the needs of a situation, cultivating the characteristics he felt circumstances demanded. These created persona varied, from the image of the hard working printer who demonstrated his industry by pushing a wheelbarrow full of newspapers through the streets of Philadelphia to the eccentric Rousseauian naturalist who paraded through Paris with a marten-fur cap. We see this sense of creating a persona and modeling one's self for the public and for posterity especially evident in Franklin's autobiography. The pedagogical tone of the *Autobiography* suggests Franklin's primary interest lay in self-preservation not in self-discovery. Though Franklin, no doubt, felt confident he would be remembered, his overriding concern seems centered on *how* he would be remembered. Franklin's "continuing popularity in a radically divided political milieu may suggest that he made himself into an adequate representation of the whole" (Breitwieser 207).

Franklin's self-fashioning has its counterpoint in the way in which he was regarded by his posterity. Writings about Franklin reveal information not only about the historical figure, but suggest, often unconsciously, views and prejudices of an author and attitudes found in the author's environment. As Buxbaum observes,

for 200 years Franklin has been a yardstick by which people have measured the worth of popular American ideas concerning success, democracy, freedom, self-reliance, humanitarianism, life, and the practical virtues of hard work, and frugality for the common man like Poor Richard or the modest hero who inhabits the pages of the *Autobiography*. (xiv)

Franklin as the embodiment of the typical American and the means by which Americanness is measured becomes a crucial barometer of a given age and the values subscribed to and promoted.

Particularly relevant to the ideologies of an era is the literature intended for and read by a juvenile audience. During the nineteenth century, literature for children really comes into its own, and the material represents in part what was deemed most important to society by the adult world. Writing for children often emphasizes those values and ideas which are felt to be crucial to relay to the rising generation. Commonly, adult material is diluted and simplified for the child's palate. Moreover, juvenile literature represents a broad spectrum of society, authored by diverse individuals often concerned in promoting various causes, such as religion, temperance, or hard work. Literature for children often contains implicit, and at times explicit, messages reflecting the milieu of the time. Additionally, children's literature is accessible to the broad population, not limited to specialists or scholars. While critical studies on Franklin have often addressed crucial issues and provide important information helpful in arriving at a more accurate view of the man, their readership and overall influence are often generally small. Children's literature, perhaps more than any other genre, provides the fullest picture of how Franklin was and is viewed and how the image of the mythic American hero came to be.

Therefore, as I approach a study of Benjamin Franklin I emphasize nineteenth-century children's literature.<sup>1</sup> During this century numerous articles and biographies on Franklin written specifically for the child audience appeared. With the first authorized publication of the *Autobiography* in 1818 and the continuous printing of *The Way to Wealth* throughout the century, Franklin grows as a central figure in the American consciousness. Early nineteenth century accounts of Franklin primarily retell Part One of

the *Autobiography*, often with a short concluding summary of Franklin's later years. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, the full-blown mythic figure appears, as Franklin becomes one of the most popular figures of biographies. He has developed Promethean qualities by which he can be given responsibility for every major event in eighteenth century colonial history, from the success of the French and Indian War to the ratification of the Constitution. By tracing the image created in the nineteenth century, we can more closely arrive at the Franklin behind the myth and assess the view of the man still commonly held by many today.

For purposes of discussion and in identifying major movements and changes in the image of Franklin, I divide the nineteenth century into four segments: Early (1800-1829), Mid-Century (1830-1859), Civil War and Post-Civil War (1860-1879), and Late (1880-1890). As with any chronological division there remains a degree of overlap between periods in that history does not occur in exclusive 20 or 30 year segments. These divisions, however, do provide access to general trends occurring at certain times, helping to bring a focus upon societal changes which promoted certain aspects of the image.

The early period (1800-1829) was affected primarily by the image Franklin himself created and promoted during his lifetime, an image his contemporaries reinforced. While much of the material aimed at children is simple anecdotes or short selections, full-fledged fictionalization appears in this period through the efforts of the able myth-maker, Mason Weems. Weems, intent on showing Franklin as a devout Christian, invents numerous incidents to demonstrate Franklin's religious faith despite his sometimes skeptic public stance. Increased interest in religion reinforces key aspects of the Franklin figure. By the end of this period, authors begin following the Weems tradition, moralizing upon the life of Franklin, further selecting and emphasizing certain events in his life upon which to dogmatize.

The mid-century (1830-1859) marks a change in the number and kind of works to appear on Franklin. While excerpts of the *Autobiography* and short anecdotes from

Franklin's life remain popular as fillers in periodicals and collected works, additional study by scholars and the availability of previously unpublished Franklin material help to round out the figure and give a more authentic picture of the man. This emphasis, however, is countered by the interjection of additional fictional elements into the Franklin narrative. During this period the intensely religious aspect of the image fuses with the hard-working, penny-pinching figure established earlier, reflecting important societal attitudes. With greater frequency authors selected a few traits of Franklin around which they related incidents of his life to prove a point or provide a moral.

In the era of the Civil War and the post-Civil War (1860-1869) we see more secular societal, economic, and literary forces forging an increasingly mythic image of Franklin. With increased industrialization and urbanization in America and a rising middle class, Franklin becomes as it were a patron saint and exemplary model held to all who would rise from less than favorable circumstances to obtain a degree of independence and security in an increasingly complex society, prototypic of the self-made man. Of particular importance is the emphasis on Franklin's scientific achievements, evident in part by the more frequent appearance of the title "doctor," an appellation used previously but reinforcing here the notion of upward social mobility to those willing to work hard. The influence of Franklin further extends into the popular culture as fictionalized accounts of his life appear with few vestiges of the real man and as the Franklinian archetype of the "poor boy who made good" becomes a commonly depicted character in novels and a growing theme in fiction. Most notably the Horatio Alger myth of "rags-to-riches" dramatically shows the impact and permutation of the Franklin myth in popular thought as Franklin is appropriated by novelists and provides the prototype to characters such as Alger's Ragged Dick (critics noting the similarity to the name of Poor Richard) and serves as the inspiration to other struggling protagonists in novels such as Alger's *Bound to Rise* and *Risen from the Ranks*. Additionally, Franklin finds his way into the mainstream of pedagogical writing by this time, with selections of Franklin's writing appearing in influential and widely read school

books such as the *McGuffey Readers*. The nationalistic and patriotic impulse surrounding America's centennial celebration and continuing through the end of the century further sparks interest in Franklin and in the important figures involved in the formation of the United States. This nationalism further affixes the image of Franklin within the American tradition, reinforcing his status as an American hero.

In the late period (1880-1890) the image reaches its full mythic proportion. In addition to the continued mention and depiction of Franklin in books and periodicals (something that continued from the previous periods of the century), these final two decades of the century show an image of Franklin synonymous with hard work, perseverance, patriotism, success, and honesty, as the mythicizing process has completely abstracted important ideologies and beliefs from the historical narrative.<sup>2</sup> The greatness of Franklin's character is further enlarged as additional emphasis is given to his political work and his diplomatic assignments. As the critical studies begin looking at the multi-talented man, or the "many-sided" Franklin as he is referred to, the grandeur and importance of the figure presented in juvenile reading material grow as well. By the close of the nineteenth century, Franklin becomes a figure of extraordinary size and influence, as is evident in two turn-of-the-century biographies, Hezekiah Butterworth's *True to His Home: A Tale of the Boyhood of Franklin* (1897) and Elbridge Brooks' *The True Story of Benjamin Franklin, The American Statesman* (1898), where an omnipotent Franklin is even given credit for the success of the Revolutionary War, having forged character in struggling Americans through the maxims of Poor Richard.

By tracing the image of Franklin through popular literature of the nineteenth century (emphasizing literature for children) and in looking at the economic, intellectual, and social climate of the time, we can begin to see how Franklin was mythicized beyond his own writings and why Franklin has persisted as a popular hero who remains a central symbol in American society. Although Franklin was not the first self-made man, one critic observes that he certainly became the archetype of one for Americans, embodying the conservative

Protestant ethics of piety, frugality, and diligence, representing the initiative and forcefulness needed to get ahead, and demonstrating the fusion of social progress and individual fulfillment (Cawelti 5-6, 9). This image of Franklin comes to us through the retelling of Franklin's life as nineteenth-century Americans sought an anchor in the midst of enormous changes, an individual to symbolize and exemplify the values and beliefs central to the American system. The Franklin which early twentieth-century critics such as D. H. Lawrence reacted against and the image which still remains popular are largely a creation of the nineteenth century.

### Notes

1. The image of Franklin can be assessed from various sources. Richard D. Miles in his 1957 article, "The American Image of Benjamin Franklin" (*American Quarterly*, 9 [1957]: 117-143), relies on selected samples from correspondence and major works of the past two centuries to trace the image of Franklin. While his study is worthwhile, it does little more than highlight general attitudes and views, dealing very little with evolution of themes and influences of one work upon another. Also limited, but certainly more comprehensive than Miles' discussion of Franklin's refashioning, is Charles W. White's *Benjamin Franklin: A Study in Self-Mythologizing* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1987). White discusses Franklin's own "self-mythologizing" and the subsequent evolution of the image through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While focusing on major adult biographies (Sparks, Bigelow, Parton, and others), White fails to show the important ideological and societal links to the increasingly mythic figure. Moreover, with the exception of Mason Weems, White all but ignores the presentation of Franklin in literature for children. Though the biographies White discusses play a crucial role in Franklin's mythologizing, they remain only a part of the mythic refashioning which follows Franklin's death. In his preface to the bibliography, *Benjamin Franklin 1721-1906: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983), Melvin H. Buxbaum recommends that a beneficial area of study would be to "trace the development of Franklin's image as it appeared in juvenile literature" (xix). As my introduction suggests, a thorough critique of works written primarily for children proves fruitful in many respects, in that the image developed in juvenile literature forms in large part the basis of the myth that later writers either endorse or debunk.

2. For an insightful discussion of the mythicizing process in relation to history, see Richard Slotkin's essay, "Myth and the Production of History," in *Ideology and Classic American Literature* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1986).

## CHAPTER 1

### THE EARLY PERIOD (1800-1829): FROM POOR RICHARD TO PIOUS SAINT

By the beginning of the eighteenth century the figure of Franklin as the hard working advocate of integrity and prudence had already begun to be firmly entrenched in the popular consciousness. One of the most significant works to influence the early image of Franklin was the 1758 printing of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. After a successful run of twenty-four continuous years of publication, Franklin reviewed the previous editions of the almanac and selected those maxims and sayings which encouraged honesty, industry, and frugality. At the time of the 1758 edition the persona of Poor Richard had become widely known both in America and abroad and his maxims part of frequently quoted proverbial advice (Van Doren 107-109). Franklin shows his awareness of Poor Richard's popularity by inventing another persona for the 1758 edition, the old man called Father Abraham, who freely quotes the advice of Poor Richard. In a speech to a group of people concerned about rising taxes and the high cost of living, Father Abraham recounts those maxims which inculcate hard work, integrity, and thrift. The popularity of this edition and the advice therein is evident by its continuous reprinting as *The Way to Wealth* through the remaining years of the eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. The ironic conclusion of the 1758 preface (later reprinted as *The Way to Wealth*) where the group listening to the old man's speech "approved the Doctrine, and immediately practiced the contrary" (Writings 1302) was largely ignored by subsequent readers, who strictly read it for its admonition to work and save.

*The Way to Wealth* demonstrates the process of abstracting and generalizing which occurred with Franklin. First, during the quarter of a century which Franklin was writing

his almanac, Poor Richard began to be viewed by many readers as one and the same with Franklin. What Poor Richard thought and said was transferred directly to Franklin without acknowledging Poor Richard as a literary creation. Additionally, the Poor Richard who is remembered and whose image is transferred to Franklin is the zealous economizing worker of the 1758 edition, a narrow view at best of the character which developed over the years of the almanac's publication. Carl Van Doren observes that *The Way to Wealth*

stands with the *Autobiography* as the best and farthest known of all Franklin's writings, and which has been taken for the essence of his wisdom. It is not that, and it gives only one aspect of the younger Franklin. Father Abraham at the auction is an old man talking about economy. He has chosen from Poor Richard the sayings which specially prove his point, and left out the rest. Having the last word, he has had almost the only word. (109)

Few readers know the Poor Richard of the earlier years whose raciness, periodic extravagance, and sometimes cynical view of money and women made him known and popular with his contemporary readers.<sup>1</sup>

With the selected view of Franklin which came during the latter half of his own lifetime due to the popularity of *The Way to Wealth* and with the image of the frugal, hard-working tradesman reinforced in the *Autobiography*, it is not surprising that the early nineteenth century perpetuated a narrow view of Franklin. After Franklin's death in 1790, various versions of the *Autobiography* appeared throughout the decade following, with the authorized William Temple edition not appearing until 1818. The publication history of the *Autobiography* itself sustained an interest in Franklin through this period as portions of the available manuscript were published, translated, and retranslated.<sup>2</sup> Besides the material William Temple Franklin published in his 1818 three-volume *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Benjamin Franklin*, the first attempt to publish any sizable amount of Franklin's writing did not come until 1840 with Jared Spark's ten-volume *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*. The mere unavailability of other material lent itself to a narrow view of Franklin. Consequently, much of the writing of this time intended for children consisted of excerpting selections of the *Autobiography* or other well known pieces (Franklin's epitaph,

"The Whistle," or "Advice to a Young Tradesman," for example), as well as the printing of *The Way to Wealth* in small chapbooks.

While *The Way to Wealth* was not written for children, by the turn of the century it had become appropriated into the domain of acceptable children's literature. Looking at prefaces to various editions reveals the growing importance placed on Franklin and his counsel to provide for and improve one's self, an important message to be learned by the nineteenth-century child. The preface to an 1810 edition of *The Way to Wealth* gives a long introduction on the benefits of wealth with a specific charge to "the young" to avoid the evils of poverty (as if poverty were a sin to be committed like lying, stealing, or adultery). The preface begins, "There is scarcely among the evils of life, any so generally dreaded as poverty" (3). An explication of the causes of poverty--carelessness, negligence, and indulgence--follows. The preface reminds us that no man feels more sympathy for the poor or can offer better counsel to them than "the sage Dr. FRANKLIN," and suggests that the obtainment of wealth offers certain advantages: it always commands respect, it allows for independence and self-reliance, and it enables the possessor to enjoy the "purest and sublimest pleasures" of doing good (4-7). A final injunction implores the young reader to seriously apply the advice they are about to read: "If *you* would enjoy [wealth], listen to the instructions of Dr. FRANKLIN, and let the words of his mouth sink deep in your heart; for simple and unlearned is the multitude to which they are addressed" (8). The message of the preface implies that if readers follow the advice found therein, they too may rise to fortune like Franklin.

An edition of the *The Way to Wealth* printed by Williams, Orton, and Company includes the subtitle, *To Be Followed by Those Who Would be Good Children and Rich and Wise Men*, inherently suggesting that adherence to the tenets within produces good children, and that these good children will become prosperous, wise men as they continue in the path Franklin prescribes. Lest any fear, however, that Franklin's sole focus centers

on the getting of money, the preface acknowledges the debt to heaven any who obtain wealth incur and the great responsibility of those whose fortune God has provided:

Yet, little friends, you must always keep in mind, that riches and the honor of the world are not the only things for which you are to strive, and when he [Father Abraham] had finished his maxims, the same man wisely observes, that learning, wealth, and honor, which are obtained by industry, prudence and honesty, may all be blasted without the blessing of Heaven: therefore see that blessing humbly, and be not uncharitable to the needy, but comfort and help them. (4-5)

To keep the attention of the juvenile mind upon the text, or at least on the book, various woodcuts intersperse Poor Richard's maxims, many not relating at all to text but rather providing visual relief for the young reader. For instance, accompanying the versified maxim, "Then plough deep,/ While sluggards sleep,/ And you will have corn to sell and keep" (8), is a woodcut of a river barge preparing to dock near a warehouse, the picture and the verse having little connection.

An 1817 edition further suggests the importance Franklin's proverbial admonitions had assumed and the degree to which they were held in esteem. The anonymous writer of the preface asserts, "This little treatise is much and justly admired, as well as its celebrated author. . . . It is to be doubted whether any other work of the kind equal to it ever appeared" (3). An English printing of this edition published by A. R. Merrifield shows that Franklin's importance had crossed the Atlantic. The English edition adds, "Poor Richard (Saunders) and Father Abraham have proved, in America, that they are no common preachers. --And shall we, brother Englishman, refuse good sense and saving knowledge, because it comes from the other side of the water?" (Introduction).

Like *The Way to Wealth*, the *Autobiography* was also appropriated for juvenile reading. The first editions of the *Autobiography*, appearing in the 1790s, contained only Part One. To give a complete account of Franklin's life to readers, old and young alike, publishers often included summaries of Franklin's later life, continuing the narrative where the *Autobiography* ends. An 1809 edition of the *Autobiography* demonstrates how an explanatory note joins Franklin's account with the later summary as the editor informs the

reader that "the life of Dr. Franklin, as written by himself, so far as it has yet been communicated to the world breaks off in this place," and that it is now continued by one of "the Doctor's intimate friends" (130), a Dr. Henry Stuber of Philadelphia, whose generally straightforward summary is extracted from nine issues of the periodical *Universal Asylum and Columbian Magazine* appearing during 1790 and 1791. The preface of this 1809 edition of the *Autobiography* suggests how a work written not necessarily for a juvenile audience can contain important information for children:

The accounts which [Franklin] has left of his life will show, in a striking example, how, by talents, industry, and integrity, he rose from obscurity to the first eminence and consequence in the world; and must prove an inducement to the rising generation to "go and do likewise." (Preface)

Whether the *Autobiography* was read by adults and its lessons in turn imparted to children or whether young people read it themselves, the important rise to fortune through hard work central to the first part of the *Autobiography* grows to become a fundamental aspect of Franklin's image.<sup>3</sup>

Franklin, then, through his own writing becomes an exemplary model for others to follow, particularly for children. In addition to available editions of the *Autobiography* aimed primarily at adults, abridged versions were also printed for children, as well as selected excerpts from the *Autobiography*, often appearing in juvenile periodicals. An 1800 *Child's Life of Franklin* excerpts heavily from the *Autobiography*, joining lengthy quotations with a thin narrative. Besides the lesson shown in Franklin's diligence as a young boy, the anonymous author of this work stresses Franklin's patriotism and benevolence (Buxbaum 49).<sup>4</sup>

Successive issues of *The Youth's Monthly Visitor*, an early nineteenth-century religious periodical aimed at children, freely uses excerpts from the *Autobiography* as filler. The intent of the magazine is expressed in an editorial preface of the initial issue of February 1, 1822, wherein the editor expresses his certainty that this periodical will contribute "in no small degree, to the instruction of YOUTH," promoting both "the moral,

as well as the literary improvement of *both* sexes" (v). In this first issue we find selections from Part Two of the *Autobiography*, here entitled, "Plan of Dr. Benjamin Franklin for Attaining Moral Perfection and Regulating the Employment of Time." An editorial note accompanying the selection suggests the commonness of this practice of excerpting Franklin material: "This very excellent paper, which we have more particularly adapted to youth, has been reprinted in an ingenious work just published, entitled, 'The Art of employing time to the greatest Advantage, the true Source of Happiness'" (55). Already Franklin is being quoted and displayed to prove a point, in this instance to encourage upright living and wise use of time. The selection in *The Youth's Monthly Visitor* contains the discussion of Franklin's thirteen virtues, the system which Franklin used to measure his progress in applying these virtues, and the daily schedule he followed to best use his time.

The fifth issue of *The Youth's Monthly Visitor* (June 1, 1822) includes what is titled, "Morning Prayer of Dr. Franklin." Again, following an excerpt from Part Two of the *Autobiography* ("O Powerful Goodness! bountiful Father! merciful Guide! . . ."), the editor says Franklin used this invocation "to solicit" the assistance of the being whom he conceived to be "the Fountain of Wisdom" (Lemay, *Autobiography* 71).<sup>5</sup> A January 1, 1823, issue of the same magazine contains Franklin's 1728 epitaph. Though never used on Franklin's grave, the epitaph proved to be a popular piece, quoted in periodicals, editions of the *Autobiography*, and numerous biographical accounts throughout the century. Its clever comparison of Franklin to a book reminds readers of his work as a printer while acknowledging his belief in and dependence on a supreme power.

In addition to the use of this type of excerpted Franklin material in periodicals, we see early school books reprinting similar short pieces, as in *The American Preceptor; Being a New Selection of Lessons for Reading and Speaking* (1805). In his prefatory remarks, Caleb Bingham, an important American educator and editor of the reader, indicates he has given preference to "American genius" in his selections and pledges that "this book

contains nothing offensive to the most rigid moralist" (Preface). He then includes two Franklin selections: "The Whistle," one of the most popularly anthologized pieces of the century, and "Advice to a Young Tradesman," a piece further warning against idleness and extolling the benefits of hard work. The Franklin material selected for many of these early periodicals and school readers and the prefatory remarks in early editions of the *Autobiography* suggest Franklin is viewed as a great American leader whose thoughts and wisdom are worth repeating to the young mind.

As the nineteenth century progresses there seems to be a growing awareness of, or at least concern about, Franklin's nontraditional views of Christianity. Up until the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century, we see virtually no defensive posturing to vindicate Franklin's skeptical side and little trumping up of Franklin to show him as the perfect model for impressionable minds or the exemplar for a given cause. The image Franklin perpetuated in the *Autobiography* and the continuing popularity of *and The Way to Wealth* seem sufficient to keep Franklin's writings a part of the popular reading material. Generally, writers make little attempt to change the image Franklin promoted of himself. This, no doubt, came in part from the scarcity of material other than the *Autobiography*, *The Way to Wealth*, and a limited number of similar miscellanies.

A marked change in the presentation of Franklin and the type of Franklin material to appear begins with Mason Locke Weems (best known for his child's life of Washington) in his 1818 biography, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin; With Many Choice Anecdotes and Admirable Sayings of this Great Man, Never Before Published by any of his Biographers*.<sup>6</sup> Weems' interest in Franklin stems at least back to the turn of the century when he was involved in almanac printing and freely talked of borrowing from Franklin's writings, particularly from *The Way to Wealth*, for his own almanacs (*Works*, II, 85; III, 26). One of the first recorded references to his interest in writing a biography on Franklin comes in a July 31, 1815, letter to Thomas Jefferson, in which Weems wrote "that no American ever led a life better calculated to do good to our youth than did Dr. Franklin," and that a

biography on Franklin, like others he has written, may "help to multiply the virtues of Industry, Sobriety, Frugality, Honesty, Patriotism, devotion to useful science &c for which Dr. Franklin was so illustrious" (III, 130). To assist him in writing the book, Weems asked Jefferson to send him any "Bon Mots, anecdotes, stories, &c, all which, if only tolerably 'cooked up,' wou'd make a savory dish for Juvenile palates" (II, 130).

Despite Weems' embellishment of the Franklin story, it was never as popular as his biographies of George Washington (c. 1800) and General Francis Marion (1809), though his life of Franklin continued to sell well enough to still be in print in 1876. The 1818 edition of Franklin's biography was Weems' third attempt at recounting the founding father's life; the first two of 1815 and 1817 were little more than a selective quoting from the *Autobiography*. The third edition, however, is entirely Weems' creation with his "never before published" material effectively sanitizing and Christianizing Franklin, making him the literal embodiment of Poor Richard's proverbial wisdom and virtues. We sense the reverence and esteem Weems gives to Franklin in a few lines of verse which adorn the title page:

Sage Franklin next arose in cheerful mien,  
And smil'd, unruffled, o'er the solemn scene;  
High on his locks of age a wreath was brac'd,  
Palm of all arts that e'er a mortal grac'd;  
Beneath him lay the scepter kings had borne,  
And crowns and laurels from their temples torn.

Franklin, the wise old man, stands dignified despite his years of toil. Not only has he stood before kings but he has risen above them, their accomplishments and ornaments beneath him.

The tone and approach of Weems' life of Franklin and his life of Washington are similar, even though the popularity of the latter far surpassed that of the former.<sup>7</sup> While Weems had little factual information to contend with in recounting Washington's younger years, he had Franklin's own memoirs to reconcile with in his idealization of the printer's youth. In the end, not surprisingly, Franklin proved the better teller of his own life's

story. In many of Weems' biographies, certain invented anecdotes caught the reading public's popular imagination and were perpetuated as true. No such popular fable emerges from Weems' biography of Franklin, although a deathbed scene which ends the book continued to be frequently quoted throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The most famous creation from the Weems canon comes from the Washington biography--that of Washington and the cherry tree. The context of Weems' anecdote suggests a twofold purpose and is typical of the literature of the day intended for children. In the anecdote, Weems not only suggests that young people tell the truth, but he relates the story to convince parents that physically spanking or beating children encourages dishonesty, for they are apt to lie for fear of corporal punishment: "lads will lie to spare the rod" (*Washington*, 15).<sup>8</sup>

Weems begins his book on Franklin in a manner which sets a precedent for subsequent biographers to follow. Listing many of the accomplishments of Franklin's later years, Weems juxtaposes these with his humble beginnings. The tone is one of adulation and awe.

DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, PRESIDENT OF THE AMERICAN PHILOSOPHICAL SOCIETY; FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH, LONDON AND PARIS; GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF PENNSYLVANIA; AND MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY FROM THE UNITED STATES TO THE COURT OF FRANCE, was the son of an obscure tallow-chandler and soap-boiler, of Boston, where he was born on the 17th day of January, 1706. (5)

The bold-type titles listed suggest the areas of Franklin's major accomplishments, his moral, scientific, civic, and diplomatic achievements, all the more remarkable given his indigent origin. Weems continues by saying that some men are recommended by their looks and some by their names, with few receiving the advantages of both. Of course, "the hero of this work" is among the favored few. After a brief mention of Franklin's charming looks, the remainder of the chapter is devoted to a discussion of Franklin's name and family. Weems goes to great lengths to establish Franklin as a "gentleman," a curious thing for the man who came to represent the antithesis of inherited privilege and birth. All

of Franklin's ancestors, according to Weems, were "well born," but this did not cause any to "deem it beneath them to continue . . . useful courses" (6). In part Weems seems to be showing that despite America's interest in usefulness and in labor, common men can maintain a degree of gentility. The apocryphal details of this first chapter Weems attributes to an "indubitable authority," no doubt his own fertile mind. Such authority or camouflaged hearsay and fiction ("from the best accounts which I have been able to pick up" [6]) serves as the basis for Weems' narrative, which grows ever more imaginative.

In the beginning of the book, Weems uses Franklin's ancestry to establish a tradition of honesty, temperance, and hard work which Franklin is naturally inclined to follow. Weems states, "it would appear that a passion for learning had a long run in the family of the Franklins" (6). Speaking of an Uncle Thomas who was trained as a blacksmith in England, and who was not above working by "the din and sweat of his anvil," Weems says he was a great reader who "instead of wasting his leisure hours, as too many of the trade do, in tippling and tobacco, . . . acquired enough of the law to render himself a very useful and leading man" (6-7). Weems also focuses on Franklin's Uncle Benjamin, who is briefly mentioned in the *Autobiography*, but who in Weems' account plays a significant role during Franklin's youth. Weems tells of Ben corresponding with this English uncle, who came and visited his American relatives before his death. The notoriety of Weems' Uncle Benjamin comes, in part, from folios of sermons he transcribed and pamphlets he collected as well as his own seemingly endless doggerel verse. Uncle Benjamin, having survived his wife and nine of his ten children, comes to America when Franklin is nine and, according to Weems, spends the remainder of his years in young Benjamin's home. Weems characterizes Uncle Benjamin as "another old *English gentleman* of the right stamp, though a very hard-working man at the silk-dying trade, was equally devoted to the pleasures of the mind" (7). According to Weems, young Ben is said to have taken great enjoyment in his uncle's company and in spending a great deal of time with him. The delight is not to be wondered at, says Weems, "for he was an old man who

wore his religion very much to win young people --a pleasant countenance, --a sweet speech --and a fund of anecdotes always entertaining, and generally carrying some good moral in the tail of them" (7). While Weems begins a tradition of establishing Uncle Benjamin as an important figure in Franklin's formative years, it is not until the latter part of the century that Uncle Benjamin eclipses other influential forces to become, in some instances, the sole source of Franklin's virtues.

For Weems, Franklin's father has a more important influence upon young Franklin than either his Uncle Thomas or Uncle Benjamin. The proverb, "'The devil tempts every man, but the idler tempts the Devil,' was a favorite canto with wise old Josiah; for which reason, soon as their little lips could well lisp letters and syllables, he had [his children] all to school" (10). After discussing Josiah's many virtues, Weems observes, "The reader must already have discovered that Ben was uncommonly blest in a father" (13). Josiah is said to have had such wisdom that individuals often call on him to settle public and private disputes, with the leading men of Boston often consulting him on important civil and ecclesiastical matters. Many of these influential men join the Franklin family for dinner, providing an opportunity for Josiah to see his family instructed by introducing topics of conversation which "would, in a pleasant manner, lead to ideas useful to his family, both in temporal and eternal things" (14).

In addition to these qualities, Josiah (like Washington's father portrayed by Weems) is depicted as an extremely patient man with a keen sense for child rearing. After recounting the often related incident of Franklin and his friends building a stone wharf at the mill pond, using materials taken from "certain honest masons," Weems depicts Josiah's behavior as being markedly different from that of the other parents who "chastised their [sons'] folly with a severe flogging" (12). Franklin's father takes a more temperate approach. First, he listens to his son's argument that the wharf building project has been a useful one for the good of the community, and then he proceeds. Rather than spanking,

good old Josiah pursued a different course with his son. To deter him from such an act in future, he endeavored to reason him into a sense of its immorality. . . . [T]he old gentleman, who was a great adept in moral philosophy, calmly observed to him, that if one boy were to make use of this plea [of utility] to take away his fellow's goods, another might; and thus contests would arise, filling the world with blood and murder without end. Convinced, in this simple way, of the fatal consequences of "*doing evil that good may come*," Ben let drop the weapons of his rebellion, and candidly agreed with his father that what was not *strictly honest* could never be *truly useful*. (12)

Through the triumvirate of Franklin's father and two uncles, Weems provides the foundation for Benjamin's moral character, and in them and through their actions we see three cardinal Franklinian virtues demonstrated: industry, piety, and honesty. It is as if Weems, seeing what Franklin represented or what he wanted him to represent, projected these traits back in time to Franklin's ancestry, providing the hereditary and environmental variables to engender similar wisdom and virtue in Ben. These men, particularly Josiah, become the preceptors integral to helping the young boy find the right path in life. Through the course of the book Franklin in turn becomes a mentor for the readers, showing them the way to provident living.

The emergence of the preceptor figure in Weems' version of Franklin's life shows the influence of Enlightenment thinking in general and of children's literature in particular upon the Franklin myth. Influenced especially by the educational theories of Rousseau, English author Thomas Day began a tradition of writing which set the standard for a period of time known as the "age of admonition" (Meigs 98), an era lasting over fifty years following the initial publication of Day's *Sandford and Merton* (1783). Whereas John Locke had asserted that children should be guided not forced to learn, being invited to let their natural curiosities work within them, Rousseau went further in suggesting that a wise preceptor accompany youth in their quest for knowledge, providing and clarifying information when needed. Feeling that there were few books appropriate for children, those under Rousseau's influence (Day, and friends Richard and Maria Edgeworth, and others) sought to depict the appropriate education of children in fiction. To aid the youthful protagonist, there began

to emerge a stock literary character, the parent or relative or friend or teacher who knew everything, who could answer all the questions, . . . who was always at hand to make a profitable lesson out of everything, to render every experience education[al]. . . . (Meigs 97)

In a characteristic admonitory way, the mentors in the fiction discourse paragraph after paragraph in an attempt to elucidate a principle or moral "truth."

*Sandford and Merton*, published in three parts over a six-year period (1783, 1786, and 1789) was Day's attempt to present Rousseau's *Emile* in the guise of fiction for English boys" (Darton 146). The story centers on two boys, Tommy Merton, an overindulged son of a wealthy, retired planter, and Henry Sandford, a rugged boy who saves Tommy from being bitten by a snake. In this rescue Henry gains Mr. Merton's respect, and Merton places both boys under the tutelage of a local clergyman, Mr. Barlow. Barlow serves as the wise preceptor whose numerous stories and admonitions, along with the example set by Henry, eventually bring about a recalcitrant Tommy's reclamation. Though *Sandford and Merton* appears very didactic to modern readers, late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century readers would have expected nothing less. Day's novel "established itself as a model book for the young," having an influence upon the genre of children's literature until the end of the nineteenth century when the "belief that instruction was the primary object in books for the young" eventually weakened (Meigs 101, 232). In the tradition of Day, Weems establishes Franklin's father and uncles as preceptors who guide the young boy through the vicissitudes of growing up, establishing a model for later, more fictionalized narratives, when the role of the preceptor becomes central to the Franklin story.

Besides the carefully crafted details Weems adds to Franklin's life, the tone of his prose suggests both a religious and a sentimental (sometimes almost melodramatic) outlook. Without question Franklin is the favorite of his father, "the child of his old age" whose smile reminds him of his wife "when he first saw her, lovely in the rosy freshness of youth" (16). No one is more upset by the necessity of taking young Franklin out of

school to work in the family shop than Josiah. Notice the melodramatic juxtaposition of the school and shop suggested in the language of the following as Ben reflects upon his change of situation:

To have seen himself, one day, on the high road to literary fame, flying from class to class, the admiration and envy of a numerous school; and the next day, to have found himself in a filthy soap-shop; clad in a greasy apron, twisting cotton wicks!-- and in place of snuffing the sacred lamps of the Muses, to be bending over pots of fetid tallow, dipping and molding candles for the dirty cook wenches! Oh, it must have seem'd a sad falling off! (11)

Disgusted with his father's work, Franklin considers going to sea, "but his father objecting to it, and Ben having virtue enough to be dutiful, the notion was given up for that time" (11). Here Weems refrains from extolling the virtues of manual labor as he has done previously, for though Franklin is not above work, his destiny calls him to something greater.

On numerous occasions Josiah and his wife discuss the plight of young Ben. One night Franklin's mother insists they let young Franklin go to school or find some other employment so they may stop perpetually worrying about his going to sea. She argues that while other boys spend spare coins on candy Benjamin buys books, even going without food to satisfy his insatiable passion for reading. Her impassioned speech visibly moves Josiah:

Then, with looks as of a heart suddenly relieved from a heavy burden, and his eyes lifted to heaven, he fervently exclaimed--"O that my son, even my little son Benjamin, may live before God, and that the days of his usefulness and glory may be many!"

How far the effectual fervent prayer of this righteous father found acceptance in heaven, the reader will find perhaps by the time he has gone through our little book. (17)

In this and other passages Weems sets us up as readers to attribute the inevitable success of Franklin to the piety and diligence of Josiah and others, and to the devotion to God he later develops. These forces, which have such a deciding influence upon the young Franklin and his early life, will soon be infused into the character of the young boy himself, first as

he is apprenticed to his brother James to learn the printing trade, and then as he makes it on his own as a printer in Philadelphia.

Perhaps one of the most telling aspects of the Franklin story, and a crucial gauge we can use in measuring changes in Franklin's image through the nineteenth century, is the handling of the circumstances surrounding his breaking the apprenticeship agreement with his brother James and his subsequent flight from Boston to New York. Weems shows Ben in a state of bliss as he begins his profession in printing, for "he is placed by the side of the press, the very mint and coining place of his beloved *books*" (19); but he nonetheless goes to great lengths to show the unfairness of the apprenticeship system (a system in full decline by the time of Weems' writing), providing ample justification for Franklin's later flight from Boston.<sup>9</sup> The oppression of Franklin's indentures and his resistance to them serve also to foreshadow the oppressive British rule and America's resistance to tyranny which are to follow.

By the indentures Ben was to serve his brother till twenty-one, *i.e. nine* full years, without receiving one penny wages save for the last twelve months! How a man pretending to religion could reconcile it to himself to make so hard a bargain with a younger brother, is strange. But perhaps it was permitted of God, that Ben should learn his ideas of oppression, not from reading but from suffering. The deliverers of mankind have all been made perfect through suffering. And to the galling sense of this villainous oppression, which never ceased to rankle on the mind of Franklin, the American people owe much of that spirited resistance to British injustice, which eventuated in their liberties. But Master James had no great cause to boast of this selfish treatment of his younger brother Benjamin; for the old adage "foul play never thrives," was hardly ever more remarkably illustrated than in this affair, as the reader will in due season be brought to understand. (19)

In this manner Franklin is absolved from all wrongdoing associated with what was then a serious offense. In fact Benjamin becomes heroic in his resistance to the unfair situation of indentures, and, given Weems' presentation, would seem not only foolish but unpatriotic to do anything other than break his indentures.

But, for a time, Franklin works peaceably with his brother and grows in knowledge and skill of the printing trade as he applies himself to the work. Encouraged by his ability

to argue effectively with his friend Collins and to write more effectively (a skill developed through imitating passages of *The Spectator*), Franklin submits anonymous articles which are published in his brother's newspaper. When discovered, the incident causes conflict between the two as James' friends begin to pay more respect and attention to Franklin. As differences continue to arise, James "would fly into a passion and treat him with abuse even to blows" (41). Franklin reacts to this "tyrannical behavior" as expected, with it imprinting "on his mind that deep rooted aversion to arbitrary power, which he never lost, and which rendered him through life such a firm and unconquerable enemy of oppression" (41). Franklin's love of freedom and justice cannot allow him to remain in this situation for long. An opportunity finally arises that gives Franklin a way to get out of his indentures. James is arrested for statements he has printed which offend the governing assembly of Boston, and he is forbidden to continue printing the paper. To skirt the judgment which specifies he must not print the paper in his name, he relieves Ben of his indentures and then continues the paper in his younger brother's name. Though secret indentures are drawn up for the term of Benjamin's apprenticeship, all seem to know these conditions are flimsy at best, and this provides Franklin with the opportunity of leaving. When he informs his brother he is going, Ben knows that the indentures will not be held against him, and thus he "boldly assert[s] his freedom!" (42).

In asserting this freedom, Franklin knows, however, that a question of honor remains, even given his brother's provoking behavior. Weems, like many later biographers, makes an apology for Franklin's action but does it in such a way to absolve him from any blame and make the reader feel his genuine remorse over his "dishonorable decision." Weems tells us that Franklin's "numerous admirers will here blush for poor Ben, and hide their reddening cheeks. But let them redden as they may, they will hardly ever equal that honest crimson which flows in the following lines of his *own pen*" (42). Weems then quotes what appears to be a direct passage from Franklin's *Autobiography*. While the sentiment of the passage is the same as Franklin's own, Weems is more prone to

describe Franklin's feelings euphemistically. Where Franklin says he was no doubt "too saucy and provoking," Weems quotes him as having within him "too much of impertinence." Though Weems was most likely relying upon an inaccurate text (the poorly translated Robinson text being the most available version of Franklin's *Autobiography* at the time of Weems' initial edition), the softening of these characteristics suggests, nonetheless, the perceived need to place Franklin in the good graces of the reader.

Weems takes Franklin's acknowledgment and casts it within the Christian context of repentance, relying upon the biblical allusions and language to absolve him. Weems' charge "Go thy way, honest Ben" (42) parallels Christ's admonition to the woman taken in adultery: "Go thy way and sin no more." Franklin's confession, says Weems to the reader, "will plead [his] excuse with all who know their infirmities, and remember what the greatest saints have done" (42). We are then reminded how Jacob tricked his brother, robbing him of the birthright, and how David "robbed" Uriah not only of his wife, but of his life. By comparison, Franklin's actions are mere peccadilloes, and Weems reminds the reader that "there is mercy with Christ to forgive *all*, on their repentance and amendment" (43).

As I have suggested, the next aspect of this incident reflecting the changing attitudes of biographers and readers towards Franklin, the pretense under which Franklin leaves Boston, becomes a key passage in determining an author's attitude to Franklin. Being left without work in Boston (James having insured that no other Boston printer would hire him) and realizing that any generally known flight would result in his apprehension, Franklin resolves to leave the city by stratagem. He tells us in the *Autobiography* that his friend Collins arranged "with the Captain of a New York Sloop for my Passage, under the Notion of my being a young Acquaintance of his that had got a naughty Girl with Child, whose Friends would compel me to marry her, and therefore I could not appear or come away publicly" (17). While Weems does not seem bothered by this deception and lie (an issue some later biographers either apologize or shift responsibility for), he again softens

the language to paint a slightly more agreeable falsehood: "Collins engaged his passage with the captain of a New York sloop, to whom he represented Ben as an amorous young blade, who wished to get away privately in consequence of an intrigue with a worthless hussy, whom her relations wanted to force upon him" (43). In effect Weems lessens the seriousness of the encounter (ironically, one that never even took place), and further demeans the character of the young woman.

Two elements in Weems which we see continually recurring throughout the book are the foreshadowing of Franklin's later greatness during experiences of his early life and the incessant need to moralize about incidents in Franklin's youth, discoursing which often leads to long discussions totally unrelated to the topic at hand. We see both these elements in an early passage of Weems' biography. In a typically Weemsian way, a Biblical parallel usually accompanies the foreshadowing, which is almost always evangelical in tone. As a boy, Franklin wrote two poems which his brother printed and sent him out to sell. The first sold well while the second generated little interest, causing Franklin to doubt his ability as a poet. As a result, Franklin gives up poetry for good because, according to his own account, his father convinces him that he cannot support himself financially by writing poetry and that there is greater utility in mastering prose. Before leaving this incident, Weems must have a final word: "I cannot let fall the curtain on this curious chapter, without once more feasting my eyes on Ben, as, with a little basket on his arm, he trudged along the streets of Boston crying his poetry" (22). Here Weems interjects the Biblical story of David who while tending his father's sheep would never have dreamed he should some day single-handedly slay the giant Goliath. Then comes the analogy:

In like manner, who that saw this "*curly headed child*," at the tender age of thirteen, selling his "*blind men's ditties*," . . . would have thought that this was he, who, single handed, was to meet the British ministry at the bar of their own house of Commons, and by the solar blaze of his wisdom, utterly disperse all their dark designs against their countrymen, thus gaining for himself a name as lasting as time, and dear to liberty as the name Washington. (23)

Not only is the Biblical allusion and language important to begin associating Franklin within the mainstream of traditionally held religious belief, but through association with undoubtedly the most revered American of the early nineteenth century, Franklin's greatness is enhanced. The Washington association grows in importance later in the century until Franklin nearly surpasses (and in the minds of some does surpass) Washington in popularity and importance (Hart 197; Brooks, *True Story* 247, 249).

Immediately following this analog comes a curious digression on idleness and the dangers of tobacco:

O you time-wasting, brain-starving young men, who can never be at ease unless you have a cigar or plug of tobacco in your mouths, go on with your puffing and champing--go on with your filthy smoking, and your still more filthy spitting, keeping the cleanly house-wives in constant terror for their nicely waxed floors, and their shining carpets--go on I say; but remember it was not in this way that our little Ben became the GREAT DR.  
FRANKLIN. (23)

Weems is too much the preacher to resist any opportunity to sermonize, even when it seems out of context. Even here the stress is on the obscure who becomes famous, the "little" which becomes "GREAT." The sense of religion and morals always associated with an action or event sets that stage for Weems' more direct Christianizing, an effort he undertakes in confronting Franklin's acknowledged skepticism and early views.

A source of concern which would keep many from an unreserved endorsement of Franklin was his self-characterization as a skeptic at best and an atheist at worst. In the *Autobiography* Franklin tells us that after reading Shaftesbury and Collins, he became "a real Doubter in many Points of our Religious Doctrine" and by his "indiscreet Disputations about Religion" began to earn the reputation of being "an Infidel or Atheist" (13, 17). Such admissions, tame as they seem, caused great concern in the minds of some nineteenth-century admirers of Franklin. To redeem his reputation many, including Weems, began a crusade to show Franklin's faith through Christian actions, and in some instances a full conversion. For many, anything less than a professed Christian failed to serve as an unblemished model worthy of emulation.

Weems' initial method of defense is to discuss the issue of hypocritical believers, those who profess Christ but act contrary to his teachings. Weems discusses Franklin's early arguments with Collins about religion and his use of the Socratic method in disarming zealous promoters of religion who failed to live up to what they preached. Weems assures us that Franklin never

took pleasure in confounding those who were honestly desirous of *showing their religion by their good works*; for such were always his ESTEEM and DELIGHT. But he could never away with those who neglected JUSTICE, MERCY, and TRUTH, and yet affected great familiarities with the Deity, from certain conceited wonders Christ had wrought *in them*. (38-39)

Clearly, Franklin's antipathy centers on "false" Christians, for he resents "that the religion of love and good works tending to this, should be usurped by a *harsh, barren puritanism, with her disfigured faces, whine and cant*" (39). It is not that he is adverse to religion, but he has little tolerance for those who do not live decently and charitably. Especially noteworthy is Weems' specific mention of "puritanism," suggesting his rejection of man's innate depravity in favor of a more positive view posited by Enlightenment thinkers and early nineteenth-century religionists.

Intermittently throughout his Christian moralizing, Weems returns to more secular concerns with which few readers would take issue: the benefits of hard work and the dangers and evils of such vice as alcohol. While the themes of industry or temperance have a much more prominent role in the implicit message of later biographies, both play a part in Weems' attempt to mythicize his subject. Inevitably coupled with the mention of industry is the virtue of frugality. The hard-working Franklin saves continually to purchase books, books which not only help toward his self-education but become the means to see him secretly out of Boston:

Ben had no money. But he had money's worth. Having, for four years past, been carefully turning into books every penny he could spare, he had by this time made up a pretty little library. . . . So turning a parcel of them back again into money, he slipped privately on board of a sloop, which on the third day landed him safely in New York. (43)

For Weems, himself an avid book maker and seller, it is no surprise that books are seen as a good investment. From New York, Franklin continues on to Philadelphia, where conscientious saving and hard work continue as a theme: he "picked up money by his industry, and being quite frugal, lived so happy, that except for his parents, he seldom ever thought of Boston nor felt any wish to see it" (53).

Seven months after leaving Boston Franklin returns to solicit his father's assistance in setting up a printing business in Philadelphia. During this visit, Franklin impresses the workers at his brother's shop. Through his diligence and wise management of money, he returns in a new suit of clothes, sporting a new watch with nearly five pounds sterling lining his pockets, important symbols of his new found prosperity. While Franklin's chief motive in visiting his brother's shop seems to be a desire to taunt James, Weems sees Franklin's visit as a desire to demonstrate to others what hard work and conscientious saving can produce. He tells his brother's workers that "great things lay before them if they [will] but continue *industrious* and *prudent*, and make themselves *masters of their trade*" (55), an admonition aimed at the reader as well. Weems acknowledges that Franklin was the favorite of his father, but the preferential treatment was deserving for "one whose rare genius and unconquerable industry, if but conducted by prudence, would assuredly, one day, lead him to greatness" (56).

Franklin, of course, proves worthy of this trust, and in telling his father why he had not written during his initial absence from Boston, explains his negligence:

I know, father, what a deep interest you took in my welfare, and therefore I resolved never to write to you until by my own industry and economy I had got myself into such a state, I could write you with pleasure. This state I did not attain till lately. (57)

Throughout the narrative Franklin demonstrates these qualities of prudence and industry, with Weems always tying them to the success finally (and famously) achieved. Weems puts his religious stamp to the traits, an aspect of the emerging Protestant work ethic. Franklin's father tells him these virtues "are the noblest funds that God can bestow on a

young man" (59). While vice can cause a loss of fortune or prevent obtaining one, with virtue--specifically the qualities of diligence, prudence, and honesty--Franklin "will have the glory to be the artificer of [his] own fame and fortune" (60). Such dogma develops to a greater degree during the mid-century and increases in importance even more near the century's end.

During Franklin's visit to Boston, Weems returns to the issue of religion with perhaps the longest sustained dialogue on a given subject by any two characters in the book. While Franklin is unsuccessful in winning his father's support for the printing venture, the reunion between the two provides Weems an opportunity to explore various tenets of Christianity. As Franklin prepares to leave, Josiah sighs, "Yes, Ben, we part to-morrow, and perhaps never to meet again! . . . O my son, what a wretch were man without religion? Yes, Ben, without the hopes of immortality, how much better he had never been born?" (63). This provides Weems (via Josiah) to reflect on the benefits of religion and the purpose it gives to life. Josiah admonishes his son to "lay hold of religion, and secure an interest in those blessed hopes that contribute so much to the virtues and joys of life" (64). This brings Franklin's confession that many in Boston feel he has no religion, that he has apostatized from it. "God forbid!" exclaims his father, 'But whence, my son, could these prejudices have arisen?'" (64). Franklin proceeds to give the reasons he has been labeled as such, none of which Josiah either remembers or knows about.

What follows is a long discussion of "true religion." Josiah admits to many of the points his son makes about professed believers. Ben convinces his father that the end of religion is God's glory, which interpreted means man's happiness. He reasons that God's intent in creating man was to see him attain the highest degree of perfection and happiness possible. This comes to man only through goodness and benevolence, traits conspicuously absent in the followers of many organized religions. Neglecting the importance of works, many Christians promote total reliance on faith. Josiah, fearing that his son is treating the

matter of faith too lightly, remarks, "I am afraid, my son, you do not treat this article of our holy religion with sufficient reverence" (70). Franklin responds,

I mean not the least reflection on FAITH, but solely on those hypocrites who abuse it to countenance their vices and crimes. . . . I look on faith as a *mean* to beget that *moral goodness*, which, to me, appears to be the only qualification of heaven. (70)

For Franklin, religion is like a barren fig tree without the fruits of benevolence and good works. As Franklin pauses in his artful reasoning, Josiah interjects that had Franklin studied divinity as he and his Uncle Ben had wanted, he certainly could have obtained a license to preach. Here Weems goes off on other variations of the theme, only to return to the final conclusion that if a bad man, through faith or professed righteousness, were to be admitted into the presence of God, the dissimilarity between the two would be so horrifying and painful to the man that he would "fly away as weak-eyed owls from the blaze of the meridian sun" (74).

Expressing his appreciation to his son for elaborating his views, Josiah remarks, your language indeed is not always the language of the scriptures; neither do you rest your hopes, as I could have wished, on the *Redeemer*, but still your idea in placing our qualification for heaven in resembling God in *moral goodness*, is truly evangelical, and I hope you *will one day become* a great christian. (74)

To this Franklin responds that he will likely not become a Christian in name as his father hopes for, but that he is certain they will see each other in the presence of "that UNUTTERABLE BEING, whose disinterested goodness [is] the spring of all . . . felicities" (75). Through this discussion Weems portrays Franklin as an intent believer in benevolence and righteous living, showing the morality of his views in contrast to hypocritical religionists. Concluding the fictitious dialogue between the father and son, described as "one of the most amiable parents, and one of the most acute and sagacious youths that our country, or perhaps any other has ever produced" (75), Weems waits until the end of Franklin's life and the conclusion of the book to make his final arguments in Franklin's behalf.

Another incident from Franklin's own narrative which didactic writers exploit centers on his boyhood friend John Collins, who helped him escape from Boston. While Collins is depicted as an astute, able young man, even the favorite of many preachers, he subsequently falls through a weakness for liquor and cards, providing a lesson and warning to all. When Franklin leaves Boston the second time, he meets Collins in New York. Weems works for all the pathos possible in Franklin's discovery of Collins' vice.

Great was the joy of Ben at the sight of his friend Collins, for it drew after it a train of the most pleasant recollections. --But who can describe his feelings, when flying to embrace that long esteemed youth, he beheld him now risen from his chair equally eager for the embrace, but alas! only able to make a staggering step or two before down he came sprawling on the floor, drunk as a lord!

To see a young man of his wit --his eloquence --his education --his hitherto unstained character and high promise, thus overwhelmed by a worse than brutal vice, would have been a sad sight to Ben, even though that young man had been an entire stranger. But oh! how tenfold sad to see such marks of ruinous dishonor on one so dear, and from whom he had expected so much. (78)

Weems gives an anti-aristocratic sheen to the incident using the cliché, "drunk as a lord." Even in such small ways Weems endorses the preferability of democratic values, a theme more evident in later narratives in which Franklin epitomizes American patriotism. In various invented incidents which follow, Weems shows the depth of depravity to which Collins has sunk and uses Franklin as a mouthpiece to preach against the evils of drink.

But imbibing is not the only danger against which Weems wants to warn his young readers. Mere association with those so inclined to the bottle constitutes a serious threat to one's moral safety. While Collins is with Franklin, he convinces Franklin to loan him some money, money which Franklin has collected for a friend of his brother's. After Franklin allows Collins to talk him into parting with some of the entrusted cash, Weems carries Franklin through a soul-wrenching, two-page soliloquy on the foolishness of his actions:

What demon . . . could have put it into my head to tell Collins that I had Vernon's money! Didn't I know that a drunkard has no more reason in him than a hog; and can no better be satisfied, unless like him he is eternally pulling at his filthy swill? And have I indeed been all this time throwing

away Vernon's money for brandy to addle the brain of this poor *self-made* brute? Well then, I am served exactly as I deserve, for thus making myself a pander to his vices. (86)

Franklin feels he is justly punished for his foolishness but fears he may now be forced back to an apprenticeship in Boston with his brother James, a situation likely if the debt is recalled.

Weems continues his address to the reader with a direct warning:

O young men! young men! you that with segars [sic] in your mouths, and faces flushed with libations of whiskey, can fancy yourselves *clever fellows*, and boast the long list of your *dear friends*, O think of the curses that Ben bestowed on his dear friend Collins, for bringing him in such a scrape; and learn that an idle, drinking rascal has no friends. (87)

After two more pages of temperance talk, Weems' Franklin arrives at the decision "for ever hereafter [to] shun, as I would a beast, the young man who drinks *dram* and *grog*" (89). Of course, Weems must make one final warning, casting the whole incident in a religious context:

And now perhaps, after all the fair prospects of his youth, and all the fond hopes of his parents, poor Collins, untimely buried in a foreign church-yard, only serves for the pious to point their children to his early tomb and remind them how vain are talents and education without the restraints of religion. (91)

While rejecting the "barren puritanism" of his progenitors, Weems cannot fully endorse the more liberal Enlightenment view of man's innate goodness. A necessary function of religion is to restrain the natural inclinations of man. Without religious instruction, a type of training which promotes bridling sensual passion, degradation soon follows, no matter the amount of talent or education one possesses, as we clearly see demonstrated in the case of Collins.

Weems continues the biography in like manner, proceeding up to the end of Part One of the *Autobiography*, interspersing incidents of Franklin's own life with moralizing admonitions, inventing details in instances where he deems a greater impression needs to be made. Through various editions of *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, Weems added extraneous miscellany from Franklin's later years to further the volume's marketability,

connecting the various selections with a thin narrative. Extracts from letters and essays as well as numerous anecdotes all serve to further the image of an upright, industrious, God-fearing Franklin. In discussing *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Weems characterizes it as abounding with "the finest maxims on Industry, Temperance, and Frugality, thrown together with astonishing conciseness, and written with that happy mixture of *gravity* and gaiety that captivates every body, and never tires" (134). He boasts that Franklin often sold 10,000 to 15,000 copies of it a year in Pennsylvania alone, and it has done more than any other piece of writing in the middle and southern states to inculcate the "REPUBLICAN VIRTUES, of INDUSTRY and ECONOMY, which point to the WAY TO WEALTH" (135). He makes special mention that Franklin's best maxims were collected for the 1758 edition of the almanac which was later reprinted as *The Way to Wealth*. Having "whet the reader's appetite" for the almanac and, in particular, *The Way to Wealth*, Weems then takes pleasure in reprinting the text of the latter in its entirety.

This practice of reprinting selections of Franklin's writings serves as the model for the next 30 pages of the book where Weems prints 15 different essays or short pieces, selections such as "The Whistle," "Stoop, and Go Safe" (an anecdote relating to a visit with Cotton Mather), and "Advice to a Young Tradesman." To these pieces Weems adds his own editorial comments and admonitions. Weems follows this excerpted section with a short discussion of Franklin's interest in electricity and the famous kite experiment, and some general comments about his diplomatic work in England and France. The remainder of the book then is devoted, in large degree, to a final attempt at showing Franklin as a professed Christian. Weems says, "I have been told that Dr. Franklin on his deathbed often returned thanks to God for having so kindly cast his lot of life in the very time when of all others he would have chosen to live for the great purposes of usefulness and pleasure" (181). While many call themselves Christians, Weems sees Franklin as having "lived to set the example of a better christianity" (181). In a discussion of charitable and benevolent acts, Weems recounts the many things which Franklin did for others, which to

Weems is the hallmark of true Christianity. His inventions, projects, and public service testify of his godly life. Weems includes letters and accounts of Franklin's inclination towards religious things, attempting to frame them within a Christian context. An account of his motion to adopt prayer at the Constitutional Convention, a letter to a niece admonishing her to attend church regularly, and a letter denouncing a pamphlet written against Christianity are printed as proof of Franklin's religious sentiment, which Weems molds into a profession of Christian faith.

The closing paragraphs of the biography bespeak Weems' most creative attempt at this pious revisionism, the one which is most noteworthy and which will be associated with the emerging mythic figure in the years following. Just as the Washington/cherry tree story seems to have been Weems' greatest mythic moment in his Washington biography (the one that became affixed to the popular image of the "Father of our country" and which continues to be told to demonstrate Washington's integrity), a concluding anecdote in the Franklin biography has enjoyed a similar popularity, though not with the same enduring power. Weems centers his concluding remarks on Franklin around an account related to him by a Mr. David Ritter, an acquaintance of Franklin's. While the nature of the testimonial which follows has the effect of adding credibility to the incident (Ritter is someone who was there, reporting the final moments of Franklin's life), the discriminating reader readily notices the elements of a folkloric account.

In the anecdote, Ritter says he "always had a prodigious opinion of doctor Franklin, as the *useful*est man we ever had among us, by a long way; and so hearing that he was sick, I thought I would go and see him" (236). When Ritter arrives at Franklin's house, he is greeted by "old Sarah Humphries," a kindly Quaker woman who has been caring for Franklin in his final sickness. But Ritter is informed that he has come too late, for Franklin has peacefully passed away just minutes before. Sarah does, however, insist that Ritter come in and see the body. Ritter describes the body looking natural, eyes closed, and if but for the lack of breathing, he "would have thought he was in a sweet

sleep, he looked so calm and happy" (237). The implication, of course, is that only those who die with a conscience devoid of offense before God and man could look so serene. Ritter notices Franklin's face is somewhat fixed towards the chimney and naturally turns to see what lies in that direction. He sees that just above the mantle "was a noble picture! O it was a *noble picture*, sure enough! It was the picture of our Savior on the cross" (237).

A discussion ensues as to how this picture came to be placed above the fireplace, especially since many people thought Franklin "was not after this sort [i.e., Christian]" (237). Sarah explains that "many who makes a great fuss about religion have very little, while some who say but little about it have a good deal" (237). Ritter agrees with her observation, and she proceeds to tell him the story behind the picture.

Many weeks ago, as he lay, he beckoned me to him, and told me of this picture up stairs, and begged I would bring it to him. I brought it to him. His face brightened up as he looked at it; and he said, "Aye, Sarah," said he, "*there's a picture worth looking at! that's the picture of him who came into the world to teach men to love one another!*" Then after looking wistfully at it for some time, he said, "Sarah," said he, "*set this picture up over the mantelpiece, right before me as I lie; for I like to look at it;*" and when I had fixed it up, he looked at it very much; and indeed, as thee sees, he died with his eyes fixed on it. (237-238)

An exegesis on this event follows with Weems asserting that Franklin died with full faith and belief in his Savior:

Happy Franklin! Thus doubly blest! Blest in life, by a diligent co-working with "THE GREAT SHEPHERD," in his precepts of perfect love. --Blest in death, with his closing eyes piously fixed upon him, and meekly bowing to the last summons in joyful hope that through the force of his divine precepts, the "wintry storms" of hate will one day pass away, and one "eternal spring of love and peace encircle all." (238)

Weems concludes by reprinting Franklin's epitaph, though his own more overtly religious preface precedes it.

Now Franklin in his lifetime had written for himself an *epitaph*, to be put upon his grave, that honest posterity might see that he was no *unbeliever*, as certain enemies had slandered him, but he *firmly believed* "that his *Redeemer liveth; and that in the latter day he shall stand upon the earth; and that though worms destroyed his body, yet in his flesh he should see God.*" (238)

The epitaph, differing slightly from Franklin's original, follows:

The Body of  
Benjamin Franklin, Printer,  
Like the Cover of an old Book,  
    Its Contents torn out,  
And stripped of its Lettering and Gilding,  
    Lies here, Food for Worms.  
Yet the Work shall not be lost:  
For it will, as he believed, appear once more,  
    In a new and more beautiful Edition,  
Corrected and amended  
    By the author. (238)

Weems acknowledges that this epitaph was never put on Franklin's grave, "but the friend of man needs no stone of the valley to perpetuate his memory" (238). Not contenting himself with Franklin's own acknowledgment of divinity, Weems puts it within a Christian context by his prefatory quotation from the biblical book of Job, asserting that Franklin died firmly believing "*that his Redeemer liveth*" (238).

The work of Weems suggests an approach to Franklin that continues as the nineteenth century progresses, with authors refashioning the image and their writing to reflect prevalent ideologies. Franklin as a prominent figure in American history becomes a popular subject of such cause-fitting. Weems' primary concern with Franklin appears to be with religion and making a publicly viewed skeptic conform to the mainstream of American religious thought. Through his incessant moralizing, particularly the final deathbed scene, Weems helps forge Christian elements into Franklin's image. The impact of Weems is evident as subsequent Franklin biographies published throughout the nineteenth century more often than not make reference to Franklin dying as he stares longingly at a picture of the crucified Christ. Even as late as 1935 reference is made to this event in a biography intended for young readers.<sup>10</sup> While the issue of religion becomes less crucial in the latter nineteenth century, to readers of the early century the piety of Franklin would have increased his popularity. But perhaps it was all that enforced piety of Weems that made this book less popular than the life of George Washington.

Weems further corroborates the faith of Franklin in the conclusion of his Washington biography. Weems concurs with the statement "that a man's death is a true copy of his life" (Garland facsimile 76). With reference to Franklin's last hours, this would suggest that his final profession of faith and acceptance of Christ demonstrates his true nature, a fact suggested in a more startling way in the Washington biography. Not content with showing Washington's death, Weems' fertile imagination and ministerial zeal carries the nation's first President into the afterlife. As Washington dies, the voice of the dearly departed patriot is heard in "the ear of wisdom" saying "Children of Columbia, *weep not for me!* My streaming eyes are closed in death. My throbbing heart shall beat no more. With me the storms of life are *past*, and I am at rest" (79). Then,

on angel wings, the brightening saint ascended. Far and wide the air was filled with fragrance; while voices more than human were heard warbling through the happy regions, hymning the great procession towards the gates of Heaven. His glorious coming was seen far off; and myriads of mighty angels hastened forth, with golden harps, to welcome the honored stranger. High in front of the shouting hosts [was] seen the beauteous [form] of FRANKLIN . . . , with all the virtuous patriots who on the side of Columbia, toiled or bled for liberty and truth. (79)

Franklin, now an exalted angel in God's presence, greets and embraces Washington with "tenderness unutterable" (79), afterwards leading the newly arrived "saint" to the throne of God, "whence from a cloud of gold, sweeter than music, the almighty voice was heard, '*Servant of God, well done! faithful has been thy warfare on earth! for the sorrows of a moment receive now the joys of eternity!*'" (80). Franklin, by his prominent presence in the heavenly throng, is no doubt worthy of the same commendation, his Christianity verified by his exalted state.

Weems seems aware of the importance of a Christian hero in his own evolving depiction of Franklin. The first two editions of his *The Life of Benjamin Franklin* were little more than a copy of the first part of the *Autobiography*. Apparently sales were not as brisk nor as impressive as Weems had hoped, so he set out to add what he calls his "moralizing scribblings" to the *Life* (Works III, 250). During 1820 Weems refers to the

1818 version (his first truly original edition) as his "last & *Best* edition" (292), and in a letter to his publisher asks for it to be reprinted. This 1818 edition is the first to contain the incessant sermonizing and the deathbed anecdote. In referring to this biography of Franklin in late fall of 1820 and seeing the possibility of its use in schools, Weems writes, "As to Dr. Franklin. We must assuredly print it again. That Book may do, *more* by promoting 'THE SAVING VIRTUES,' to prolong the Independence of this Country, than all the Maps in the World" (296). By an 1820 Christmas edition, wherein Weems finally deletes all lengthy quotations from Franklin's *Autobiography* and adds a few final touches of his own, the biography assumes the form it ostensibly keeps for the remainder of the century.

Weems is among the first of a long list of nineteenth-century biographers who see an instructional and redemptive value in biography. In commenting upon his own works, Weems observes,

these moralizing Biographies . . . will help many a poor child to early wisdom, and Patriotism & Honor like Washington. . . . Christian Children are taught *heathen* languages, and *Worldly* Sciences; but very rarely have they had Preceptors to "teach their young ideas how to shoot." . . . But still it will be greater Joy to help young minds to that tenderness of Conscience & firmness in resisting vice & doing duty. (*Works* III, 324)

In his life of Franklin, Weems takes the elements of an already engaging story and injects them with his own particular attitudes and dogma to present Franklin as he "should have been" if in a given instance he fails to fit the ideal of what Weems wants or needs for making a point. This attitude remains common throughout the nineteenth century as biographers transform the life and image of Franklin to fit the expediency of prevailing (or perceived) needs and ideas.

By the end of this early period, with the continued inclusion of Franklin material in school readers, the idealized nature of the image begins to grow more evident. Writers continue to go beyond Franklin's own account in depicting important events in his life, as is evident in Rev. J. L. Blake's *Historical Reader* (1825). Blake, an Episcopal clergyman

turned writer, informs his readers that it is his intent to provide information on the "most interesting and useful portions of history," and readers are to blame "if suitable moral reflections are not made as they pass along" (iii, viii). Using a varied stock of information acquired from his work as a cleric and as a schoolmaster, Blake imbues his work with such didacticism that only an obtuse reader could miss the moral. In writing about Franklin, Blake chooses to relate his interest in electricity, especially his invention of the lightning rod. Blake tells the account in dogged (heroic) couplets, depicting Franklin as a valiant hero who by the invention of the lightning rod completely removes the danger from electrical storms. The closing six lines provide a feel for the tone and moral quality Blake adopts.

His daring toils, the threat'ning blasts that wait,  
Shall teach mankind to ward the bolts of fate;  
The pointed steel o'ertop th' ascending spire,  
And lead o'er trembling wall the harmless fire;  
In his glad fame while distant worlds rejoice,  
Far as the lightnings shine, or thunders raise their voice. (272)

For Blake, Franklin has not only invented a useful device but has taught the world how to rise above dangerous challenges and meet the seemingly impossible.

One final example from the early period suggests the roots of a nationalistic impulse also working in the popularity of Franklin's image and shows the beginnings of other characteristics which Franklin more fully comes to represent in later accounts. An anonymously written short biography, *Stories about Dr. Franklin; Designed for the Instruction and Amusement of Children*, adopts much of the same moralizing quality found in Weems, but with much less emphasis on religion. The preface sets the context of the book against the backdrop of some anti-American feeling expressed by a French author, showing first Franklin's greatness and then, by inference, America's. Among other things the Frenchman is to have said that America has failed to produce one great man in the annals of world history. The anonymous author responds to this Frenchman by claiming that Thomas Jefferson had previously identified several great Americans, including

Franklin, "who he thought was one of the greatest [men], the world ever saw" (3). The author then, condescendingly, proceeds to inform us that he is going to tell his "little readers something about this great Dr. Franklin" (5). His purpose in doing this is twofold: First, it is honorable for a country to have great men and for everyone, including children, to know about them. Second, Franklin may provide encouragement to "little readers," even those whose "parents are poor," in showing them that exertion is the key to success, for Franklin "was never idle. --not like a drone" (6).

The events of this biography follow the incidents recounted in the *Autobiography*, at times quoting Franklin's own words directly. Like Weems, this author periodically interrupts the narrative to moralize on a particular topic the story has called to mind. For instance, when Franklin borrows books from others because he cannot afford his own, the author remarks:

This makes me think of what [Franklin] said about his being *punctual* to return books, which he had borrowed. He was always up to his word. This is a good hint to my young readers. What we borrow we should return, and at the *time* we promise. Punctuality is an excellent trait in a man's character. Such a man is trusted without hesitation. He always finds those, who are not only willing, but pleased to lend him what he needs. (11)

This advice only serves to remind the author of yet another lesson as he continues his admonition:

I must not forget another thing. Young Franklin was not only punctual to return what he borrowed in season, but to return it uninjured. . . . This made people still more willing to lend to him. (11)

Following a lengthy discussion of borrowing and returning, the author concludes, "Franklin set a good example in this respect, and I hope my young readers will try to follow it" (12).

After relating other incidents from the *Autobiography*, we then encounter the crucial events leading up to Franklin's flight from Boston. This author seems keenly aware that Ben's action in running away from Boston was not only illegal but in direct disobedience to his father's wishes. Where an author like Weems minimizes this aspect and focuses more

on Franklin's later sorrow at behaving so inexcusably, this account provides another moral lesson. The incident is introduced apologetically: "I must now tell my young readers something which I wish I might conceal" (16). The author says that Franklin and his brother often quarreled, and without taking sides, he believes both were in the wrong--as "is usually the case" (16). While he acknowledges that Franklin in his later years felt bad about things between him and his brother, we are reminded that Franklin did feel his brother had wronged him. As tension grows in his brother's shop, Franklin determines to go to New York, a decision in part precipitated by James' cruel treatment. This decision then warrants a lengthy authorial digression and warning:

This determination he made without consulting his father. In this he did wrong. Parents should always be consulted, especially by children under age. They generally know what is wise for children to do, even better than children do themselves. Besides, they have a *right* to direct all cases which are lawful. In this instance, we must condemn young Franklin; and indeed all who do as he now did. (17)

Feeling that one major wrongdoing was enough at this point, the biographer glosses over any discussion of the "naughty girl" and the lie used to get aboard the sloop. We are merely told, "When he had determined to go, he sold a part of his books, and with the money he raised, he went privately on board a sloop sailing to New York" (17-18).

We later have reference to Franklin's disobedience to his father, but it is usually always qualified or its reprehensibleness lessened by stressing some of Franklin's redeeming traits. For instance, in the depiction of Franklin's early weeks in Philadelphia we read, "He had done wrong in leaving home as he did; he now did wrong in not letting his father know where he was. I ought to say however, that he was quite industrious, sober, and frugal" (25). These cardinal Franklinian virtues become a palliation for his wrongdoing and a way that his undesirable behavior can be partially reconciled and tolerated if not accepted.

Without undue elaboration, the traits of diligence, temperance, and prudence are mentioned numerous times throughout the text and serve as the foundation for Franklin's

success and greatness, which the author seems so concerned with in the preface. We are told Franklin "was very industrious, and in a few years made a handsome fortune" (43). One threat, though, to this industry and hence success is the evil of alcohol. While later biographies fashion Franklin more directly as a temperance advocate, this biography merely warns young readers to abstain from liquor if success is desired, with Collins as the prime example. Franklin's friend again enters the narrative, primarily as a foil to show what lack of industry and indulgence in drink produce. After recounting the traditional encounters with Collins as related in the *Autobiography*, the author pauses to preach:

What a lesson is here taught all my young readers. Collins was a youth of great promise. He had genius equal to Franklin, and in attainments even excelled him. He was sober, industrious and beloved. He might have been eminently useful and respectable. But he began to drink, and drink ruined him forever. (35)

The account then returns to Franklin, focusing on his success and achievements rendered by his abstinence and hard work. As further proof of his greatness, we have a brief discussion of his accomplishments in later life as a scientist, statesman, and diplomat.

One interesting inclusion in this biography is the fictitious anecdote of a visit Franklin made to Boston in his later years prior to his mother's death. While not stated explicitly, the incident seems to provide, in the context of the book, a direct contrast to the type of boy who left Boston under dishonorable circumstances. To the author, Franklin's original flight from Boston was reprehensible. But Franklin clearly redeems himself through hard work, by his abstinence from liquor, and through his frugal habits. We have almost the suggestion that these traits when conscientiously adopted bring not only success but produce a transforming effect upon an individual that has even physical manifestations. In the anecdote, Franklin returns to Boston and is admitted into his mother's presence. Like Odysseus returning home, Ben is not recognized by his mother and would have the stranger be off. But it is a cold January evening and the servants beg her indulgence to let the man warm himself by the fire. Reluctantly, she consents. As one thing leads to another, Franklin ends up staying for dinner and spending the night in a chair in front of

the fire. Not until morning does Franklin reveal his identity to his mother, and she graciously begs his forgiveness.

While this anecdote was in common circulation (it is retold in other publications in varying versions) and has no explicit moral drawn here, its inclusion, given the tenor of the rest of the biography, suggests that a transforming power lay in the virtues Franklin developed. As we have seen from Franklin's *Autobiography*, those individuals who fail to live frugally, honestly, and industriously never rise above their circumstances and end up as desperate, broken men--notably Collins, Ralph, and Keimer. Franklin, however, despite his early weaknesses, undergoes a moral change as he adheres to these primary virtues, correcting all his "errata." This moral transformation results in a change of social standing as well, with Franklin gaining fame and fortune due to his perseverance. In the context of this anonymously written biography, the author seems to suggest that these changes also brought a marked change in Franklin's demeanor, testimony to the physical manifestations evident in virtuous men.

The Franklin depicted in the majority of these pieces of the early period differs little from the self-crafted figure portrayed in the *Autobiography* and the persona of Poor Richard, images which by this time become virtually inseparable from the historical figure. We see, however, significant changes beginning to occur and the roots of important trends emerging. Perhaps more than any other author of this period, Mason Weems has the greatest influence upon the image and takes the greatest liberty in refashioning Franklin to fit his particular needs. Few subsequent authors feel so impelled to defend Franklin from the charge of being anti-Christian. Certainly none does it with greater creativity. In many ways Weems establishes the image within an acceptable Christian framework, securing Franklin's story within that framework to such an extent that others fail to see the need to rework the material in this regard. Weems' image endures until the time his sermonizing goes out of fashion and societal needs called for a sermon and an image of a different sort. Nonetheless, remnants of the Weems' sanctimonious and sanitized Franklin continue

throughout the century and are unquestionably accepted as part of the real man. During the mid-century, we will see further elaboration of aspects of the image which began to appear during this early period.

### Notes

1. In his still standard biography, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Garden City Publishing Co., 1941), Carl Van Doren discusses in more detail the Poor Richard no one remembers. Chapter 4, Section VI (pp. 106-115) gives a concise history of the almanac and provides numerous quotes from earlier editions of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, showing the "other side" of Poor Richard, and consequently of Franklin. Few readers know the Poor Richard who said, among other things, the following: "Never spare the parson's wine nor the baker's pudding" (1733). "A house without a woman and firelight is like a body without a soul" (1733). "Neither a fortress nor a m--d will hold out long after they begin to parley" (1734). "A ship under sail and a big-bellied woman are the handsomest two things that can be seen in common" (1735). "Wealth is not his that has it, but his that enjoys it" (1736). "He that lives upon hope, dies farting" (1736).
2. J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall offer fine summary and a thorough annotated listing of the key editions of the *Autobiography*'s complicated publication history in the Norton Critical Edition of the *Autobiography* (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986).
3. In discussing eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century children's literature, one finds it difficult to categorize a work strictly as either juvenile or adult. Most juvenile reading material of this period was originally published for adults only to be appropriated to the domain of children. It becomes clear that works like the 1809 edition of the *Autobiography* referred to were intended for juvenile as well as adult reading by the common practice of personally inscribing books. Books like the *Autobiography* were commonly given to children as gifts for special occasions or as prizes or acknowledgments of some meritorious action. In my work in the Baldwin Library at the University of Florida (one of the finest existing libraries of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century children's books), I encountered numerous examples of the *Autobiography* and *The Way to Wealth* inscribed to children, as well as other standard adult biographies on Franklin.
4. In some instances I was unable to consult a work directly, either because of its rarity or inaccessibility. To insure thorough coverage of trends and show connections between certain aspects of Franklin's evolving image, I rely on the excellent annotations in Melvin Buxbaum's *Benjamin Franklin, 1721-1906: A Reference Guide* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983). In those cases where I use Buxbaum, I acknowledge and note the reference.
5. In all citations of the *Autobiography*, unless otherwise specified by edition date, publisher, or place of publication, I use the Norton Critical Edition edited by J. A. Leo Lemay and P. M. Zall (New York and London: W. W. Norton & Co., 1986).
6. For additional information on Weems, see Lawrence C. Wroth's *Parson Weems* (Baltimore: The Eichelberger Book Company, 1911) and Lewis Leary's *The Book-Peddling Parson* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: Algonquin Books, 1984).

7. Robert G. Miner, Jr., in the preface to a photo-facsimile of Weems' 5th edition of the *Life of Washington* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1977), claims that the Washington biography became "the second best-selling book of its time" (vii), surpassed only in numbers sold by the Bible.
8. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotes from Weems' *Life of George Washington* come from the 1854 edition.
9. W. J. Rorabaugh provides a general overview of the decline of the apprenticeship system from colonial times through the post-Civil War years in *The Craft Apprentice: From Franklin to the Machine Age in America* (New York and Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986). Though Rorabaugh overstates the significance of Franklin's *Autobiography* in bringing about the demise of the apprentice system ("In leaving this legacy [the *Autobiography*], Franklin did more than any other American to put the age-old institution of apprenticeship on the road to extinction" [15]), he does provide a useful discussion of other forces affecting the system's waning popularity and usefulness, such things as the failure of guilds to develop in America, the absence of effective prosecution and punishment for runaways, the importing of indentured servants, a shift in fundamental ideologies with greater emphasis on individual rights and freedom, the advent of cash wages, and a change in familial structures accompanying industrialization and urbanization. Though a plethora of apprentice advice literature emerged between the Revolutionary and Civil Wars to counter the system's decline, irreversible economic and societal changes precluded any return to a dying tradition that had taken hold in America only in limited ways.
10. While the ostensible facts of Weems' account remain the same (Franklin dying with his eyes affixed to the picture of the Savior), we see the folkloric effect of the continual retelling of the story through the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century. The original account has Weems hearing that a minister of a local church, a Rev. Dr. Helmuth, had a valuable anecdote. Weems proceeds to see the minister who informs him he knows of the story but that Weems ought to go the source of the account, Mr. David Ritter. Ritter then becomes the acquaintance of the story who visits Franklin's home and is informed of the anecdote by Sarah Humphries. In the natural retelling the chain of events are shortened and the effect heightened. Helen Nicolay's 1935 biography, *The Boy's Life of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: D. Appleton, 1935), eliminates Ritter altogether and has the reverend (Helmuth, though not mentioned by name) speaking to Franklin directly. Franklin is purported to have quoted to Helmuth several of Watts' hymns from memory, commenting upon their beauty. He then turns and speaks of the picture of Christ which hangs above the mantle. He later dies with his eyes affixed to the painting.

## CHAPTER 2

### MID-CENTURY (1830-1859): SHIFTING EMPHASES

As the period of the mid-century begins, the type and tenor of material quoted on Franklin remain much the same as it had during the previous decades. Relating short anecdotes and printing excerpts from his writings continues as standard practice. With the emergence of anecdote books, anthologies containing anecdotal information on important men, and the continued practice of using short pieces as fillers in periodicals, Franklin remained a frequent figure in popular reading material. What is significant to note is a change in the type of anecdotes which seem most frequently published. While a collection like *American Anecdotes* contains some lighter pieces like "The Blue Yarn Stockings" or "Franklin and the Barber" wherein Franklin teaches the French court about plain dress in the one instance and shows that his head is too big for a French wig and by implication for "*all de French nationg*" in the other, by far the majority of the anecdotes tend to do one of two things: (1) show Franklin as a Christian or at least a religious man or (2) portray Franklin demonstrating or teaching one of the cardinal principles that have been associated with him, especially industry and sobriety. The religious and work aspects of the image seem to be most important, at least by the frequency of anecdotes published.

In addition to continued publication of items like his epitaph, as seen, for instance, in a September 1837 issue of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian*, we see other items like "Franklin a Christian" in Freeman Hunt's 1830 edition of *American Anecdotes*. In this instance Hunt perpetuates Weems' fiction of Franklin on his deathbed delighting in a picture of Christ on the cross. We see further evidence of the Christianizing in two anecdotes included in *Peter Parley's Book of Anecdotes*. Parley, pseudonym for Samuel Griswold Goodrich, entitles his two entries on Franklin, "Eloquence of Whitefield" and

"Dr. Franklin's Last Words." The "Eloquence of Whitefield" tells of Franklin's experience in listening to the persuasive preacher, George Whitefield, who was soliciting money for a religious project in Georgia. Franklin had resolved not to give any money, but so powerful was the oratorical persuasion of Whitefield that he "drew out all the contents of his pocket, among which were several gold pieces, and emptied every one into the collector's box" (136). The editorial comment suggests that Franklin's generous donation shows he was a firm supporter of religion, the convincing rhetoric of the sermon as motivation being dismissed when a point is to be made. The anecdote "Dr. Franklin's Last Words" follows the Weems tradition of placing a dying Franklin in the mainstream of believing Christians. Approached by a skeptic who doubted the truth of the Bible, Franklin roused himself from his deathbed, scarcely able to speak, and advised

that it was his last and solemn advice to him, that he should diligently study and believe in the Holy Scriptures; that there was no safety in unbelief; and he begged him with his dying breath to think of his eternal interests. (128)

And, of course, who can dispute the last words of a dying man, especially one named Benjamin Franklin.

In a piece called "Letters to a Young Christian" appearing in a November 1833 issue of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian*, another anecdote attempts to show Franklin's knowledge of and love for the Bible. As a part of a larger discussion of the need to read and cherish the Bible, the author of the letter tells of Franklin meeting with a group of English ladies to discuss pastoral poetry and proposing to read to them a translation of a pastoral poem he has discovered. He reads to them the Book of Ruth from the Bible, which no one recognizes. They exclaim it is the finest pastoral poem they have heard. Franklin then "gravely" tells them it is from the Bible, and the author comments that for all he knows the women were at worst "infidels" who ridiculed the holy word. "Even in our day," remarks the writer, "how little attention do the sacred oracles command!" (366). This practice of using Franklin to support religious dogma continues through the period as we see in an anecdote found in *The Year-Book of the Unitarian*

*Congregational Churches for 1856.* As various savants of France ask for the strongest proof as to the divine origin of Christianity, Franklin, in an answer acknowledged as best by all, observes that the greatest proof of the divinity of "Christianity would be true Christians" (Buxbaum 121). By implication Franklin's "Christ-like" desire to benefit others and his numerous benevolent acts witness his true Christianity.

Often coupled with this religious sentiment is an additional moral on temperance or industry. A March 1838 issue of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian* tells of an incident where Franklin is forced to drink to excess. His host locks the door after a dinner party, and he and the group insist on Franklin drinking with them. A few months later Franklin invites the group over, similarly locks the door after dinner, and then insists that his guests finish off legs of beef and of mutton he has just brought in. The editorial comment indicates that it is not known whether the group was shamed out of their "beastly practice" of imbibing, but we should all realize that "intemperance, whether in food or drink, is at once a sin against God, and a degradation to our rational nature" (87). The anecdote provides an instance where a secular virtue, temperance, gains religious authority by being a "sin against God." Similarly, virtues such as industry and prudence begin taking on the weight of religious sanction as well. While in this period anecdotes are not used to make the explicit statement that material success is a measure of righteousness, the implication clearly remains that good practicing Christians work hard, save conscientiously, avoid idleness, and consequently achieve success. For instance, in a September 1841 issue of *Parley's Magazine* idleness is decried in "The Silver Fish-Hook," which suggests a man would be wealthier and better off actively engaged in useful employment than idling away his time fishing.

What begins here is a codifying of a largely Protestant tradition, the work ethic, in secular terms. The emphasis on work appears to have grown along with the economic and industrial advancements of the nineteenth century, trends which will be discussed in greater detail in the Civil War and post-Civil War period. As Daniel T. Rodgers observes in his

book *The Work Ethic in Industrial America 1850-1920*, by the mid-nineteenth century America had begun to generate a "commitment [to] the moral primacy of work" (xii). More important than the actual task performed or the speed with which one completed a job was the force of the idea of work itself. Nineteenth-century writers and ministers dwelt on the dignity of labor and the worth of those who performed their work conscientiously. The elevation of work over leisure permeated nineteenth-century life and manners and surfaced with continual warnings against idleness and the ways of the idler.

Though the work ethic is a complex set of ideas, it had its genesis with the Protestant Reformation's stress on the obligation each individual had to work and the accountability individuals had for how they used the time allotted them. Work became associated with the doctrine of calling, promoted through the idea that God had a productive vocation for everyone. As individuals worked, their efforts went for the common good of society and for the glory of God. Work did not replace faith as the saving principle, but "Protestantism extended and spiritualized toil and turned usefulness into a sacrament. . . . In the things of this life, the labor [was] most like to God" (Rodgers 6-7, 8). Stress on the converse of work came in warnings against misspent time, a tradition extending back to Puritan roots. One reason for the work ethic's pervasiveness came from preachers' ability to demonstrate the disgrace of idleness while joining productive hard work with the demands of faith in a palatable form, often in homilies and Sunday School tracts. Influential preachers like Henry Ward Beecher, who published widely such popular tracts as *Advice to Young Men* (1844), gave unqualified endorsement of work. The influence and popularity of a book such as Beecher's can be seen by its continuous printing up until the 1920s. Faith and works promoted by such religionists gave sanction to enterprise and a sense of mission to industrialists and businessmen in their vocational pursuits (Rodgers 9-10; Bode 125).

Similarly, the call to labor can be seen in a poem such as Longfellow's popular "Psalm of Life" (1838). Longfellow, later writing of the circumstances surrounding his

composition of the poem, tells us the idea expressed in verse came as "a voice from my inmost heart, at a time I was rallying from depression" (2). Lest we are convinced that "Life is but an empty dream" (3), Longfellow charges us to "act, that each to-morrow/ Finds us farther than to-day" (3). Stressing the importance of worthy exemplars like Franklin, Longfellow suggests that

Lives of great men all remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time. (3)

Our "footprints" in turn serve as inspiration for others who follow. Thus, Longfellow states with his now famous line taken from *Poor Richard's Almanack*, "Let us, then be up and doing" (3), a rephrasing of the mid-century's obsession with Franklinian industry.

In many discussions of work and warnings against idleness, writers and lecturers invoked and quoted Franklin. With Franklin's religious skepticism disarmed by Weems and others, his example and writings (as we see depicted in the *Autobiography*, *The Way to Wealth*, and books and articles wherein elements of these works are excerpted or elaborated on) become more popular as they are seen to embody and promote the work ethic. Rather than promoting work and wealth as a way to glorify God as did his eighteenth-century religious counterpart Cotton Mather, Franklin saw work as a practical way to obtain material comfort and success. His attitudes and writings about work helped secularize the religiously held virtue of industry and reinforced the moral importance of honesty and frugality. As *The Way to Wealth* codified Franklin's standing as a proponent of diligence, prudence, and integrity, religionists in turn used Franklin to endorse their views of prudence and work, thus emphasizing Franklin's importance as well as bringing him further into the realm of American Protestantism. With the religious emphasis on wealth, the monetary rewards Franklin obtained slowly replaced the "other-worldly" rewards of traditional faith.

The religious force of the work ethic developed to such an extent that a man's worthiness tended to be equated with his monetary assets. Many reasoned that if poverty or wealth existed purely as a result of an individual's efforts and if wealth resulted from virtue, the amount of one's wealth would then correspond to the degree of one's righteousness. Money served as a sign of divine approval, a reward for righteousness. As wealth was equated with virtue, salvation became the "business" of men (Huber 15). Many felt, however, that money-getting received too much emphasis, and preachers sounded cries of warning against too great a concern with materialism. This resulted in warnings against mammon, as

professional moralists flooded the market with didactic handbooks and lectures intended to reinforce ethical principles in a country that seemed well on the way to ruin. Their expressions of concern may have been wholly genuine or they may have been exaggerated; in either case they demanded that Americans live up to a thoroughly traditional moral code. (Welter 142)

These moralists, emphasizing the sentiment they saw expressed in an essay like Emerson's "Self-Reliance" (1841), stressed the development of individual character rather than the exclusive accumulation of riches as the object of life. Paradoxically, the "very doctrines the moralists appealed to in order to curb the appetite for mere wealth worked instead to legitimize it" (Welter 146). Their assurance of a moral universe where good was rewarded and evil punished worked to undermine their warnings since, for them, wealth was the natural result of goodness.

This call to work hard combined with the admonition to live frugally, to develop honesty and integrity, and to avoid tobacco, liquor, and immorality, further moralized the work ethic. Frugality, like industry, received divine approbation as a religious duty for the morally upright. The simple, frugal life implied abstinence from such costly vices as alcohol and tobacco and became integral to the character of not only the hard-working religious man but of the successful, self-reliant man. The essentially religious doctrines became central to secular success, for "men could be what they willed to be and an extraordinary man could look forward to extraordinary rewards" (Welter 147).

Here again, Franklin proved a prime exemplar of these secularized ideals. Narrative anecdotes from Franklin's life (his saving boarding money to purchase books while apprenticed to his brother James, his abstaining from alcohol while learning the printing trade in England, and his regret for indulgence with and subsequent warning against low women) and the persona of Franklin/Poor Richard provided the structure to carry the ideology of the proponents of success, reinforcing the mythic stature of Franklin which began developing in the early period. With a clearer definition of Franklin's representative traits, details of Franklin's life and his writing not relevant to the specific cause at hand were overlooked and subsequently forgotten. With the secularization of the Puritan pulpit and Protestantism, Franklin became an exemplary figure, demonstrating all the virtues the ethic encompassed. In his own account Franklin himself transformed his vices into mere peccadilloes, simple errata easily corrected; subsequently, any faults were usually whitewashed and eliminated altogether from the popular image.

The transformed, secularized Protestant ethic found expression in what has come to be known as the cult of success, with an accompanying permutation, the cult of self-improvement. We can see the pervasiveness of the ideas of success, self-improvement, self-reliance, and self-education (note the characteristic emphasis upon the individual with the descriptive prefix "self") in looking at material published during the nineteenth century as well as surveying the popularity of lectures and lyceums where speakers discussed these topics. One reason that self-help literature succeeded came from the advent of popular literacy accompanying technological advancements in printing and the greater opportunities for education. Books and tracts became less expensive to produce with the introduction of innovative cloth bindings and less expensive ways to make paper. Railroads and other forms of transportation eliminated distribution barriers, making audiences in interior regions more accessible. Enhanced chances for education caused the literacy rate to rise to over 90 percent of white adult males by 1850, the largest literate public hitherto known (Gilmore 3-4; Bode x).

Readers interested in self-improvement found themselves inundated with a proliferation of success and self-help advice in pamphlets, tracts, books, magazine articles, and literature. The sentiment of success fused with the image of the self-made man and is evident in various writing throughout the nineteenth century. Merle Curti traces the idea of self-achieved success through various authors of the nineteenth century and characterizes many of the prominent forms in which writers expressed the idea, showing how Franklin provides the impetus for many of the changes which follow:

Freeman Hunt, Charles C. B. Seymour, and others had compiled popular biographies of [successful] men, and innumerable writers had put out guides to self-help and success. All these writings emphasize the possibility of fame and fortune for any persevering, hard-working, frugal, virtuous, and intelligent boy, no matter how obscure, how poor or otherwise handicapped he might be. In the development of the cult of the American hero no theme played so great a part as that victory over obstacles, the rise to eminence in the face of poverty and hardships. Faith in the possibility of getting ahead through individual effort, which had been so well expressed in *Poor Richard's Almanac*, was reflected in Emerson's "Hitch your wagon to a star," in Margaret Fuller's "Genius will thrive without training," in J. G. Holland's "We build the ladder by which we rise," and in the various versions given these aphorisms in ordinary speech. The cult of getting ahead through one's own efforts was both reflected in and still further popularized by the McGuffey readers and other schoolbooks, by tales, essays, and verses in popular magazines and newspapers, and by commencement addresses in academies and high schools which frequently began and ended on the theme "Beyond the Alps lies Italy! ( 645)

The closing line, "Beyond the Alps lies Italy," echoes the sentiment of Longfellow's "Excelsior," reflecting in poetic form the ideal of rising through hard work and perseverance. The poem depicts a man laying all aside while pressing forward to accomplish his purpose. The exclamation "Excelsior," meaning higher, always upward, concludes each stanza as the man progresses from an Alpine Village to the mountain peaks and then on to God himself.

As Curti suggests, the cult of success and self-improvement manifests itself in numerous varied forms throughout the century. Through the first half of the nineteenth century, Franklin's own life story and writings formed the nucleus of much of the self-help material. The popularity of *The Way to Wealth* continued through the first half of the

nineteenth century with various publishers (in the absence of copyright laws) copying freely part or all of Poor Richard's sayings as found in *The Way to Wealth*, or amending and adding to their own editions of the work.<sup>1</sup> When trying to compile a Franklin bibliography towards the end of the nineteenth century, Paul L. Ford found it impossible to list all the editions of *The Way to Wealth*, and indicated it was his belief that the short treatise had been printed and translated more often than any other work by an American (Ford 55; Huber 21, 464). With the *Autobiography*, Poor Richard's wise maxims gave impetus and fuel to the proponents of success and self-help.

With an increasing interest in Franklin, lecturers and lyceum speakers used Franklin and his life story as a topic in addressing audiences. A series of Franklin lectures were begun in Boston in 1831 with the explicit purpose to inspire young men to achieve success by using the opportunities before them. Beginning the lectures, Edward Everett suggested Franklin's story of rising in the world from poverty and obscurity could not be too often repeated. By 1856 Franklin was still held up as an example for young men to follow, as is evident in a speech by Robert Winthrop, a popular orator, given that year during the unveiling ceremony of a Franklin statue. Winthrop, along with Jared Sparks, then acting president of Harvard, had solicited Boston businessmen to contribute funds to construct the statue. Winthrop, serving on the statue's design committee, speaks of his own feeling of connection with the early American patriot having been born himself on Boston's Milk Street, and in his unveiling speech calls for all to follow Franklin's example.

Behold [Franklin], . . . holding out to you an example of diligence, economy and virtue, and personifying the triumphant success which may await those who follow it! Behold him, ye that are humblest and poorest in present condition or in future prospect,--lift up your heads and look at the image of a man who rose from nothing, who owed nothing to parentage or patronage, who enjoyed no advantages of early education which are now open,--a hundred fold open,--to yourselves, who performed the most menial services in the business in which his early life was employed, but who lived to stand before Kings, and died to leave a name which the world will never forget. (qtd. in Wyllie 14-15)

Clearly by mid-century the ethic of work and the tradition of success was deeply rooted into the American consciousness, with Franklin one of the chief exemplars of the tradition.

With increased stress given the ideology of success and marketplace capitalism, a subtle change begins to enter the Franklin narrative, accompanied by a concomitant shift in the image itself. Throughout the mid-century less stress is placed on fathers and mothers as we see a minimizing of parental assistance. As Winthrop observes, Franklin rises without the aid of "parentage or patronage." This departure from the Weemsian paternalistic ideology gives way to the greater emphasis on entrepreneurial competition. While the patriarchal values reflected in Weems and others persists, intermittent examples like Winthrop's reflect a decline in the significance of parentage, an aspect of the image becoming more central to the narratives during the Civil War and post-Civil War period.

During the mid-century a new type of book emerges that promotes a topical emphasis on work and success. Publishers found that an anthology or volume of collected biographies focused around a central idea proved popular. In numerous instances brief biographical sketches of Franklin, often demonstrating a certain characteristic, can be found in these works. An 1830 volume by George Lillie Craik, *In Pursuit of Knowledge Under Difficulties*, contains three chapters on Franklin, dealing with his early life up to his scientific work with electricity. Craik designates Franklin as the greatest self-educated man who overcame difficult circumstances to stand equal among the best educated of his day.

The secret of this man's success in the cultivation of his mental powers was, that he was ever awake and active in that business; that he suffered no opportunity of forwarding it to escape him unimproved; that, however poor, he found at least a few pence, were it even by diminishing his scanty meals, to pay for the loan of the books he could not buy; that, however hard-wrought, he found a few hours in the week, were it by sitting up half the night after toiling all the day to read and study them. (qtd. in Buxbaum 78)

Craik shows these characteristics as the reasons for Franklin's success and the achievements he accomplished throughout his life.

The prolific Peter Parley added two books to the list of topical anthologies in 1844 with *Tales about Great Men* and *Lives of Benefactors*. In his *Tales about Great Men* he

defines great men as those "who have been deservedly famed for their eminent knowledge in various departments of science and literature, or singularly successful in advancing the best interests of their fellow-men" (vi), criteria which Franklin meets on all points. Parley places these men before us as readers as a "means of exciting within you a laudable emulation," to show that such position and honor as these men enjoy is "at your command, viz., by persevering industry and application" (vi). Of course with this focus, Benjamin Franklin ranks first among men, and his life is discussed in the first 25 pages of the book. The instructional tone of the work, reflecting an ideology of literature for use, is established from the beginning as Parley reminds the reader that "you should never read such narratives without seeing what you can learn from them" (1). Parley, as is the case in most of these short biographical sketches, follows closely the events of the *Autobiography*. The difference between most of the retold versions lies in the authorial commentary and the amount of didacticism inserted into the story. In his topical collections, Parley tends to find ample opportunities to moralize. After relating many of the hardships of Franklin's early years, Parley interjects,

Only think how much greater are the privileges of most of my readers to those which Benjamin Franklin enjoyed! And then think again of the good use he made of those which were within his reach, and learn a lesson of gratitude and diligence from the reflection. (2)

Parley suggests that young readers should make the most of their many available opportunities when Franklin succeeded having so few.

As the narrative continues Parley seems almost to lose Franklin's story as he more frequently speaks directly to the reader about various issues. Attentive to social class dynamics, Parley uses Franklin as a means to address the working man, the employee who should be willing to work hard. Consequently, the didacticism increases. While stressing that any man can improve his situation and respectability through diligent effort, Parley does not want to promote unrest in workers by unduly emphasizing Franklin's rise to greatness wherein he leaves hard manual labor behind. Parley quickly asserts there is

virtue in any job, as long as it is diligently and honestly performed. When Franklin grows increasingly unsatisfied with his work as a tallow-chandler, Parley assures the reader that this vocation would not

have been in any wise derogatory to his worth or honor, had the duties of his station been honestly and diligently performed. A man may be truly respectable, and even dignified, though following a humble calling, by the high tone of moral and mental rectitude which he daily exhibits. (4)

Franklin, however, wanted "more scope for exercise" of his abilities and intelligence, and took the opportunity for more meaningful employment when presented to him. The first opportunity that came to him was the apprenticeship as a printer to his brother. Here again, Franklin proves the ideal worker.

He needed not a master's eye to keep him at his employment, neither was it necessary to repeat the same rules over and over again in Benjamin's ears, in order to fasten them on his memory, as it is with some youths I know. No, he discovered many things for himself; and the directions which were laid down to him, he carefully considered and adopted. This, my young friends, was pursuing the right path, and the same I would earnestly recommend you to follow. (4)

Parley indicates that Franklin had resolved to himself "to make his own fortune by his unremitting and persevering industry" (4), and the remainder of the account shows how he succeeded.

It is typical of these short accounts of Franklin's life that not much is made of the circumstances surrounding his disagreements with James and his leaving Boston. Thus, Parley merely states that the two had disagreements and Franklin, not feeling his contract was binding and "not being willing to endure his brother's severity any longer, . . . left him, and went to New York by sea, and from that place to Philadelphia" (7). The remainder of the incidents related centers on reinforcing the idea that industry produces success and subsequent greatness. When Franklin arrives in London for the first time and realizes he has been duped by Governor Keith, he is disappointed at "this unfortunate occurrence," but he loses no time in "obtaining a situation, as his present necessities call for pecuniary supplies which his purse could not meet, and which industry alone could

secure" (9). After rising in position at various print shops in London, Franklin then returns to Philadelphia where he sets up business for himself. "His industry," as Parley reminds us, "was habitual, but the idea that he was now working for himself, gave it additional energy" (11). Parley then inserts into the narrative Franklin's story, "The Whistle," as well as two pages of maxims derived from Poor Richard, further reinforcing the message of hard work. The many offices and the accomplishments Franklin attained are then listed to attest to his greatness. Parley concludes with Franklin's death and these comments:

Thus died this great man, who was once only a poor printer's boy, with scarcely a covering to shelter his head from the dews of nights. Perhaps no man ever exceeded Dr. Franklin in that solid practical wisdom which consists in pursuing ends by most appropriate means. (23-24)

For Parley, Franklin had become the incarnation of the work ethic.

While Parley does not diminish his emphasis on industry in a companion book, *Lives of Benefactors*, the focus and intent shifts as Parley attempts to show how the worldwide "wealth, comfort, happiness, and prosperity, created by Franklin's maxims and Franklin's example, . . . attest to his benefactions to his country and kind" (159), reflecting the increasingly international scope of the mythic image. In much the same manner as his *Tales about Great Men*, Parley recounts Franklin's early life, this time showing how his virtues and accomplishments helped improve the human condition. Parley makes more of James' cruel treatment of Franklin and his leaving Boston, a flight accomplished by eluding "the vigilance of his parents, who were opposed to his intention" to leave (with the inference of Franklin's "getting on" with neither parental intervention nor assistance). The previously troubling aspects of the runaway's story continue to be downplayed to show Franklin's sterling qualities and the "striking proof of that resolute adherence to temperance, industry, and frugality, which were among the leading features of his character" (131). Parley notes the great impact *The Way to Wealth* had upon his countrymen, as he tells us "copies of it were long to be found, framed and glazed, in the houses of the people in Philadelphia, and indeed in every part of the country" (141).

In keeping with his intent of showing Franklin as a benefactor, Parley focuses on actions of Franklin which clearly have a more determined effect upon other lives. For instance, the text focuses on Franklin's interest in electricity and his contribution to science, with the famous kite experiment retold in detail, a trend more significantly evident after the Civil War as Franklin's scientific work receives greater attention. We see Franklin depicted out braving the storm, convinced of his hypothesis that lightning is electrical. Just at the moment of utter despair, lightning strikes, and Franklin feels the tingle of it as the current runs down the line. Parley reports Franklin as later saying that his emotion was so great at this instance in making a discovery for the benefit of mankind (which "was to make his name immortal") that "he heaved a deep sigh, and felt that he could that moment [have] willingly died" (148), a wish which was nearly fulfilled given the extremely dangerous nature of the experiment. Franklin's last public act, "in accordance with the whole tenor of his life," further showed his interest in humanity as he signed an anti-slavery resolution, "as president of the Anti-Slavery Society," which was presented to Congress (156).

But even these beneficent acts Parley always ties back to those supreme virtues of honesty, industry, and prudence.

In looking back on Franklin's career, of which we have given a very imperfect sketch, it is evident that the principal feature in his character was *worldly prudence* --not in a narrow and selfish acceptance of the term, but that prudence, founded on true wisdom, which dictates the practice of honest, industry, frugality, temperance--in short, all those qualities which may be classed under the name of "moral virtues," as being the only certain means of obtaining distinction, respect, independence, and mental. (157)

For Parley, no other writer "inculcates lessons of practical wisdom in a more agreeable and popular manner" than does Franklin (157). His writings together with his singular conduct have served to better the human condition.

He has contributed more than any other individual in modern times, to teach the working classes to feel their power, and to assert their rights. He has taught them, as well by precept as example, the certain steps by which they can ascend in the scale of society; and hundreds of thousands have been thus led from stations of poverty and ignorance, to the most elevated in society. (158)

With this high praise, few could better serve Parley's purpose in the book to show those for whom the distinction goodness and beneficence "is felt and acknowledged by mankind" and whose life and teachings provide "a moral as well as physical sun" for others to follow (iii). This periodic stress on the "working class" suggests a revision of the image that correlates with the popular elevation of the self-made man, for which Franklin becomes a prototypic model.

Two other selections from topical anthologies published in 1853 further show how Franklin had come to represent the virtues of industry and perseverance. Notably absent from either sketch is the mention of Franklin's parents. In a selection entitled "The Boyhood of Franklin" found in *The Boyhood of Great Men, Intended as an Example to Youth*, author John G. Edgar writes of men who have "moved" the world and placed "themselves in positions that give them the power of performing great and worthy actions, and "who have achieved such greatness "entirely by painstaking, self-denial, determination, and midnight study" (v). The example of these eminent and distinguished men can help "to develop in the mind of youth noble tastes and high principles, as well as to encourage, stimulate, and sustain that spirit of industry, which is essential to the attainment of any position worth striving for (iv). Such a work, says Edgar, "intended to incite youth to industry and goodness can require no apology" (v). The beginning of Edgar's account shows the continued juxtaposition given Franklin's early years and the accomplishments of his later life.

The life of Franklin presents to youth a model most worthy of respect and imitation. Born in a humble sphere, and enjoying no advantage save that of a powerful intellect, we find him, by the exercise of invincible perseverance, ere long the representative of his native land, in whose affairs he acted so conspicuous a part, receiving the homage of the most polished court in Europe, and defying the wrath of the most powerful country in the world. (186-187)

Franklin's undeniable greatness and its cause are asserted in eloquent grandeur: "Perseverance and self-denial have raised many to eminence, but never were they more

signally triumphant than in the case of the remarkable man who 'grasped lightning's fiery wing'" (187).

Edgar highlights the main points of Franklin's early years, skimming over events such as Franklin's leaving Boston by saying, ever so matter of factly, that

after duly weighing and considering all the circumstances, Benjamin saw no other course open than to go and try his fortune in New York. Knowing, however, that if his father were apprised of his intention, he would oppose this step, it was necessary to go without his leave. (195)

Here a level-headed boy is depicted, making every day normal decisions. Only the bare thread of the original narrative is maintained as Franklin gets a printing job in Philadelphia and lodges with Mr. Read, "whose daughter he immediately fell in love with, and afterward married" (195). Little matter that details of the story are inaccurate (Franklin's brother to whom he is apprenticed is called "Josiah" not "James"); what matters most is that Franklin's life story shows, in a broad sense, the effect of working hard and sticking to a decided upon purpose. The resulting success comes about from Benjamin's tenacious laboring, without the aid of family or friends. Hard work, not kinship or patronage, prove the key to ultimate fortune and respectability. "Energy that dies in a day is useless," remarks Edgar, for those things that are truly useful to others often take a lifetime of dedication to achieve (198). Franklin's greatness shows the result of holding to one's purpose no matter how unpromising the circumstances.

William Russell continues the tradition of holding up Franklin as a paragon of hard work in *Extraordinary Men: Their Boyhood and Early Life*, adding the trait of self-denial as a key to success. Russell observes that "there are few lives more pleasant to contemplate than that of Benjamin Franklin" (89), primarily because there are no startling surprises but a constant, steady achievement resulting from good sense and diligence. This is a story of a man, according to Russell, who like countless others, made something of his life in a quiet, unobtrusive manner.

A journey printer, the son of humble parents, endowed with no more of what is understood by the term genius than falls to the lot of thousands of

men who live and die in obscurity, is seen to attain a good position in business, an eminent one in political science and literature, by the aid alone of strong, clear common sense, combined with integrity, temperance, and persevering industry. (90)

By understating what were in reality uncommon abilities in a man, Russell heightens the importance of Franklin's drive to succeed and the characteristics he displayed to see that success came.

In his account Russell follows closely the chronology of the *Autobiography*, though he does spend more time on some of Franklin's "faults" than other authors. This seems in line, however, with his characteristic presentation of portraying Franklin as a common man who rose to greatness through unswerving industry and self-denial. Collins is contrasted to Franklin in numerous instances as one who had the same potential but without the "sterling principle and habits of self-denial" Franklin showed (95). Franklin's brother James is portrayed as a authoritarian master who resorted to "peremptory and harsh control" with his workers, especially with Franklin (96). As quarrels between the brothers continued,

ultimately Benjamin resolutely broke with his brother, --sold his books, and with the proceeds, contrived, aided by his friend Collins, who represented to the master of a trading sloop that he was fleeing the consequences of an imprudent amour, --to smuggle himself off to New York. (96)

Though a sense of Franklin's own account remains in the Russell retelling of the flight from Boston, the implication is that the fictitious story by which Franklin boarded the ship was Collins' idea and instigation. This shifting of the responsibility for the falsehood is more pronounced in some of the full-length biographical accounts of this period and marks a further trend in absolving Franklin from any questionable activities, as can also be seen with the more euphemistic "imprudent amour."

The final observation of the author is that Franklin is not one of those "brilliant" or "dazzling" figures of history which seem totally beyond the realm of most people, but he shines as a "more hopeful and cheering [example]to the masses of mankind" (103). Franklin's example shows "a path to eminence which it requires no seraph's wing, . . . but

the qualities, prudently but courageously exercised, which he himself possessed, --a clear intellect, --firm purpose, --self-denial, --energetic labor" (103).

Franklin stands preeminent, despite his low-key status, as a model worthy of emulation, primarily due to his aesthetic discipline. Here again, the noticeable absence of Franklin's parents, never mentioned except at Franklin's birth (an act they are unavoidably a part of), suggests an eminence achieved through individual effort. This characteristic lack of paternal guidance and assistance reflects larger economic and societal changes as the prominence of the family farm and an agrarian lifestyle give way to urbanization and the marketplace, a trend I discuss in greater detail in the next chapter with the rise of the self-made man. As young men left the farm and entered the urban work force, they necessarily became more autonomous. The need for independence and self-reliance in a competitive market grew more pronounced in the rhetoric of the time as individuals had less familial support on which to rely.

While the emphasis in most of these collected works seems to be shifting from the religious to the secular (mirroring the secularization of the Protestant work ethic), some authors, nonetheless, felt it appropriate still to depict Franklin as a professed Christian. An 1857 holiday gift book, *The Christmas Tree: Book of Instruction and Amusement for All Young People*, contains a section entitled, "Celebrated Men who were Clever Boys," of which Franklin is a part. The short three-page entry on Franklin first stresses that he was "industrious" and a "clever workman," and then focuses on Franklin's religious beliefs. Franklin's final illness is depicted as one of great pain which he endured cheerfully, acknowledging God's goodness and blessings upon him. The article closes with Franklin's epitaph and a final comment that "his pure morality and shrewd practical wisdom are displayed in 'Poor Richard's Almanac' and several other of his works" (30). Robert A. Lincoln in his encompassing work, *Lives of the Presidents of the United States; With Biographical Notices of the Signers of the Declaration of Independence; Sketches of the Most Remarkable Events in the History of the Country, From Its Discovery to the*

*Present Time; and a General View of Its Present Condition*, discusses nearly everyone and everything relating to early American history. His summary of Franklin suggests that while he may have had religious doubts as a young man, he "became in his maturer years a believer of divine revelation" (qtd. in Buxbaum 88). Though not as animated as Weems' defense, the need to assert Franklin's religious orthodoxy was still felt by some, even with the increased emphasis on Franklin's self-reliance and his secular activities.

As we turn to the full-length Franklin biographies of this period, we see some of the same trends which were evident in the shorter anthologized pieces. Biographers place greater stress upon the Poor Richard qualities as they put forth Franklin as a worthy exemplar. For instance, two short biographies published anonymously during the 1830s, *A Brief Memoir of the Life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin: Compiled for the Use of Young Persons* and *Life of Benjamin Franklin* depict the hard working, socially mobile Franklin as the embodiment of Poor Richard's maxims (Buxbaum 83, 87). While the moralistic and didactic tenor of such works varies from author to author, the primary focus remains the same: Franklin shows young people how to succeed in life through industry, honesty, and frugality.

In 1832 Peter Parley published his first edition of *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, which he indicates in a subtitle had been adapted for use in schools.<sup>2</sup> To Parley, nothing was more attractive or appropriate for instructive purposes than a good biography. He fits his biography for school use by numbering each paragraph; he then asks corresponding questions at the bottom of each page to ensure comprehension. Additionally, Parley includes in an appendix various essays or stories of Franklin's, such as "The Whistle," "Advice to a Young Tradesman," *The Way to Wealth*, "Necessary Hints to those that would be Rich," which stress the money-getting and self-supporting work side of Franklin. While Parley's account follows quite closely Franklin's own with a minimal amount of moralizing, Franklin is shown to be doggedly persevering and industrious as he seeks his fortune. Franklin's virtues are revealed as he provides the model for children to

follow in becoming productive and successful adults. For instance, after Franklin fails arithmetic at school, he later "began to feel the want of a knowledge of figures, and was once very mortified by his ignorance of them" (20). In a characteristically Franklin style, he obtains a copy of "Cocker's Arithmetic" and through his own diligence, "went through the whole of it *by himself* with the greatest of ease. The mortification he had met with induced him to make great exertions" (20-21, emphasis added). Parley concludes that "we can succeed in any thing to which we give our earnest attention" (21).

While Parley stays fairly neutral and refrains from moralizing about Franklin's relationship with his brother James and the flight from Boston, the fault clearly lies with James, who as master "degraded" Franklin and "frequently beat him" (23). Franklin finds the apprenticeship tedious and leaves when the opportunity avails itself. Parley admits that Franklin took unfair advantage of his brother in leaving, "but he was urged to it by very unkind and even cruel treatment" (25). So without the knowledge or aid of his family, Franklin sells his books to pay for passage, and "went privately on board of a sloop, had a fair wind, and in three days found himself in New York" (26). Parley remains less judgmental in his narrative than other authors of the time and, as we see with the skimming over the flight from Boston, usually avoids aspects of the story that call for too much explaining or moralizing, at least those that fall outside the Franklin as Poor Richard framework. The framework does require, however, that the success achieved be his own, without the benefit of familial advice or aid.

Parley gives attention to other characters in the biography only insofar as they contrast Franklin's emulative virtues. Collins, for example, "had fallen into bad habits, and become a drunkard" (35) while Franklin remains true to his goal of establishing a successful business. In London, Franklin is shown "diligent in work" while Ralph, "his shiftless companion[,] consumed a good share of his earnings" (43). Franklin's commendable perseverance finally sees him set up successfully in his own business. Parley then provides the standard list of accomplishments of Franklin's later years to

demonstrate the result of his early virtue. Mainly for its entertaining value, Parley includes the fictitious account of Franklin visiting his mother in his later years and her failure to recognize him. This adds a sentimental quality to the narrative as she discovers her son's identity and embraces him "once more before she died" (105).

The guiding principle behind this biography is revealed in the concluding pages of the story where Parley draws a lesson from Franklin's life.

In considering the character of Franklin, we perceive that the most marked trait was his habit of economy. By economy we do not mean merely care in gaining and keeping his money. We mean care of time, of labor, frugality, industry, system, method in all his business. To this we may add economy of health; avoiding all excess and unnecessary exposure.

Parley also makes mention of his fine sense of humor and his service to his country, the latter of which all should feel gratitude for. It is noteworthy that Parley switches to a characteristic first-person plural "we" as he seems to indicate that there exists an undisputable consensus between the author and the reader that Franklin represents the traits he enumerates. The narrative then closes with Franklin's epitaph, a continual reminder of his piety, and the essays previously mentioned are appended.

An anonymously published 1846 biography, *Life of Benjamin Franklin; Embracing Anecdotes Illustrative of His Character*, continues to stress the values of the work ethic as does Peter Parley and others of this period.<sup>3</sup> In addition, this author harks back to the Weemsian tradition where many incidents promote a short moral lesson for the reader. Unlike Weems, however, there is no discussion of Franklin's religious beliefs nor any attempt at Christianizing the image. Similar to some of the shorter sketches found in the anthologized accounts of great men, this biography focuses on Franklin's faults, primarily the circumstances surrounding his departure from Boston. The author lists three leading objects governing the writing of his biography: to provide information previously omitted in abridged biographies, to provide juvenile readers with Franklin's good example, and to show the cause and effect of errors Franklin acknowledges and how he overcomes them. A "perfect model for imitation" has not been presented, "for such a model is to be found in

no human being," (iv) but certainly the figure of the man presented is worthy of emulation by any reader, young or old in what the author claims is the "most complete abridged biography" (iv).

The author acknowledges that "free use has been made of the autobiography" Franklin wrote himself. Especially in the beginning, numerous passages from the *Autobiography* are strung together by the author's narrative and moral-making. One such instance is with the stone wharf incident in Boston which is set up for a nice homily.

There is one incident of his boyhood which we copy, in his own words, for the moral, which his father's correction impressed upon him, and which forms an excellent maxim, as a rule of conduct for boys and men. (22)

As if the lesson from Franklin's own account was not clear enough, the author proceeds to reinforce the message of honesty with a protracted discussion of virtue. Other incidents such as Franklin's visit to Cotton Mather are recounted as the narrative takes on a topical arrangement so that anecdotal information can be inserted to demonstrate the author's carefully planned lessons. In recounting the time of Benjamin's apprenticeship to his brother James, this biography seems reminiscent of the Weems approach in attributing Franklin's love for freedom and aversion to the tyranny to his experiences as a youth in Boston. Where Weems puts forth the evils of the apprenticeship system as being responsible for Franklin's resistance to his situation, this account depicts the city assembly's censor against James and his newspaper as the real source of Franklin's early dislike of arbitrary power.

Perhaps this very difficulty of his brother with the Provincial government was among the circumstances which suggested to Benjamin Franklin, the statesman, and signer of the Declaration of Independence, the arguments which he so successfully applied, with tongue and pen, against tyranny. Such stretches of power, and arbitrary disregard of the rights, and infringements upon the property and liberty of citizens, were causes which silently prepared the way for the "Declaration of Independence."(41)

The narrative then moves directly to Franklin's resolution to leave Boston after James draws up secret indentures, the efficacy of which rest wholly upon Franklin's honor and integrity. Interestingly, the author gives no real motive for Franklin's departure.

Though he wants to show this incident as an early error, one that Ben fortunately later rectifies, the wrongdoing cannot be too serious, and Collins is introduced as the fall guy responsible for the subterfuge surrounding the actual flight.

One error, as Franklin honestly concedes it was, having been committed in his unfairness to his brother, others necessarily followed. He determined to leave Boston secretly, and the young man Collins managed the matter for him, inventing falsehoods to cover his retreat--falsehoods which prepare the reader for the subsequent misfortunes which befell Collins, and for the inconveniences and mistakes into which young Franklin was led, by the friendship of such an advisor. (43)

Here the author sets up the "cause and effect" principle mentioned in the preface. Of course, the story is stacked in favor of the hero, Franklin, who only suffers temporary "misfortunes" for his deeds, while secondary characters such as Collins and, later, Ralph inevitably end up in complete ruin. The narrator reflects upon Franklin's plight as he attempts to launch his life in Philadelphia:

But some difficulties and disadvantages still clung to him, growing out of the manner in which he first went away from Boston. Then, it will be remembered, he received the improper assistance of a young man. Perhaps, indeed, Franklin himself might have directed Collins what story he should tell to cover his flight, and Benjamin might have been more to blame in that matter than his friend. But in whatever way it was done, the consequences followed him. He became a party to a wrong transaction, of which he received the supposed benefits, and he was thus laid under an obligation to a bad boy, and was tempted and induced to do a very wrong thing in return, at his persuasion. (52-53)

The use of the descriptive "bad boy" follows the tradition of didactic stories beginning with Day's *Sandford and Merton*. In this instance, however, Benjamin fails to reclaim the recalcitrant acquaintance, the depth of his degradation being too great. Inverting Day's motif of the moral influence of the good upon the bad, this narrative suggests the unfortunate effect the bad boy has upon the good, as Collins induces Franklin to loan him money which he had collected on a debt of his brother's friend. Franklin's punishment, or the "effect," lies in living under the fear of being called on to return the loaned money. Despite any wrong choices and the subsequent consequences which result, Benjamin always redeems himself because he is "frugal and industrious in his habits," traits which

ultimately allow him to overcome all (48). Collins' demise, which finally results from his weakness for alcohol, "offers a lesson as impressive, upon the dangers of dram-drinking, as Franklin's life affords upon the good results of temperance and frugality" (54-55).

Through Franklin's association with less than honorable individuals (in particular Collins and Ralph), the author shows the danger of forming friendships with those who have weak character, a moral he elaborates upon further:

The disadvantages of the two persons with whom he was most intimate in his youth, show the value of advice to the young. If even Franklin could not escape danger, with his early sagacity, and if all his strength of character was required to save him from shipwreck, it is a most impressive warning to others. Few in his situation would escape at all, fewer still could rise like him to virtue and distinction, in spite of circumstances so adverse to both. (69)

The biography ends at this point as Franklin returns to Philadelphia and sets himself up in a successful printing trade. But the author must make one more reflection on Franklin's youth, providing one more caution to young readers, while absolving Franklin from any real blame for his childhood mistakes.

We have followed Franklin through his boyhood and minority, which the attentive reader cannot fail to have observed, were seasons to him of peculiar temptation and exposure. If he did not always do exactly right, his faults were not deliberate ones, nor were they persisted in when he discovered them; and he passed with safety through his juvenile trials. . . . (82)

The remainder of the biography provides loosely joined anecdotes with a catalogue of accomplishments that takes us through the remainder of Franklin's impressive life and career.

A final attempt is made to tie all of Franklin's vast achievements in the various fields of science, politics, and public service to those sterling virtues of Poor Richard which he tenaciously developed and held to throughout his younger years. "*Industry, Frugality, INTEGRITY*--such are the leading lessons of FRANKLIN'S LIFE. From them, all other virtues, under Providence, are derived. But the foundation of all virtue is trust in *God*, and prayer for His assistance . . ." (208). Even here, Franklin's success

ultimately can be attributed to God, though little direct attempt is made to Christianize him, let alone deal with his religious skepticism. The primary emphasis of the biography is Franklin's adherence to the work ethic as a means to success.

A small anonymous biography, a *Child's Life of Franklin*, published during the 1850s as part of the Evergreen Miniature Library by Fisher & Brothers, shows how admonitory warnings to children, such as those about youthful companionships, persisted with the Franklin narrative, sometimes being directed more to parents than children.

There is nothing so important in the formation of character as the associations of childhood. If parents were as careful as they should be in keeping before the minds of children high and noble objects of pursuit, there would be far fewer instances of depraved manhood. (15)

Of course, Franklin is put forth as one of those noble objects which shows both the way and the end of the pursuit. Great stress is placed in this account of the difficulties and disappointments Franklin overcame to obtain success and which forged the sterling character Franklin enjoyed in later years:

Youth, as well as manhood, has to meet with disappointments--*it is the way in which we bear them that we display true heroism*. And it may be that if difficulties had not surrounded the early pathway of the boy--the man would never have developed into the world renowned statesman and philosopher. (18-19)

The disappointment here referred to is Franklin's being taken from school to work in his father's business, an instance where Franklin's reaction provides the model for the reader to follow.<sup>4</sup>

In a *Child's Life of Franklin* various passages of Franklin's life are quoted verbatim from the *Autobiography*, as well as other short pieces such as "The Whistle" and portions of *The Way to Wealth*, with potentially questionable incidents in Franklin's life being omitted, like his deception to get aboard the sloop bound for New York. In this instance, the selection from the *Autobiography* is interrupted by ellipses, and the author interjects that "Collins undertook to favor [his] flight" (62). The religious sentiment remains rather high in this short work, but rather than an attempt to defend Franklin from any suspicion of

disbelief, the narrative proceeds upon the assumption of Franklin's given orthodox religious sentiment. The proposition to institute prayer as part of the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention is reprinted, with these exuberant editorial remarks following:

Glorious words! Precious testimony! Admirable example! The wisest and most venerable of all [gathered]. . . . publicly acknowledg[ed] the utter insufficiency of all human wisdom, and call[ed] upon his associates to unite with him in "humbly applying to the Father of Lights to illuminate their understandings." (169-170)

Other religious pieces like the epitaph are printed as further evidence of his piety.

One revealing inclusion in this biography is an extract from Franklin's will wherein he leaves his fine crab-tree walking stick to "my friend, and the friend of mankind, General Washington" (192). While no additional mention of or comparison to Washington is made, the association with the "Father of our country" becomes an important development to the image in the latter half of the century. There becomes a type of greatness-by-association development where the unblemished greatness of Washington falls upon Franklin. And yet, as purveyors of Franklin's story refashion the image to represent dominant ideologies of the time, Franklin, in the opinion of some, will come to eclipse Washington in greatness and importance in this comparative grouping (Hart 197; Brooks *True Story* 247, 249).

While its effect on popular literature was to be felt more in the years following the Civil War, the works of an early biographer and critic, Jared Sparks, play a significant role in the evolving image of Franklin. After ten years of research and work, Sparks published his 10-volume *Works of Benjamin Franklin*. Though by far the most scholarly treatment of Franklin then produced, Sparks could not help but represent a positive image of the colonial leader, defending him against the "prejudices" of earlier critics. In a letter to George Bancroft, friend and colleague, Sparks expresses his feeling for Franklin and reveals the guiding impetus behind his own approach to depicting him.

There never was a set of prejudices raised against any human being more utterly unfounded than those against the great American philosopher and statesman. These prejudices have afforded grounds for an entirely false

estimate of some of the essential traits of his character. It was said and continues to be repeated, that he was a man of artifice, contrivance, and finesse, and hence insincere. Nothing could be more erroneous as touching the character of Franklin. He was cautious in counsel, reserved when wisdom dictated silence, quick and sagacious in detecting the hidden elements of any subject; but he never made a promise which he did not intend to fulfill, nor uttered insinuations designed to deceive or mislead. He was generous in every sense of the word, --generous to the faults, the foibles, and the weaknesses of others; generous in his kindly feelings and sympathies, large in his charities, constant to his friends, forbearing to his enemies; bland in his deportment, unpretending, unostentatious, proud of nothing, unless of having risen by his own industry and efforts from an humble station to one of dignity, influence, and greatness; faithful to every trust, true to every pledge. . . . A more ardent and devoted patriot never lived, nor loved his country more, or served with a steadier zeal or more disinterested motives. (qtd. in White 208-209)

Though Sparks tells us that his only interest is to defend Franklin from unfounded accusations, it becomes clear that he himself had accepted the already developed mythic greatness of the man, and his writing reflects his own unlimited admiration for this exemplary founding father.

Sparks, however, makes available previously unpublished and unattributed Franklin material, and his edition of the *Autobiography* remained authoritative until Bigelow's in 1867. With Sparks' work, more information became available on Franklin's scientific, political, and diplomatic activities, areas which writers begin to emphasize more during the end of the mid-century and on into the years following the Civil War. But the uncritical adoration continues to surface in his writing as we see Franklin as one of the American's most responsible for worldwide happiness and well-being.

It was fortunate for the world, as it was for his own fame, that the benevolence of such a man was limited only by his means and opportunities of doing good, and that, in every sphere of action through a long course of years, his single aim was to promote the happiness of his fellow men by enlarging their knowledge, improving their condition, teaching them practical lessons of wisdom and prudence, and including the principles and the habits of a virtuous life. (85)

This magnanimous beneficence on the part of Franklin allows Sparks to see him as a Christian in principle, if not in professed faith, as his early deism takes on a moral sheen through virtuous action.

Utilizing much of the information uncovered by Sparks, Orville Luther Holley writes one of the most comprehensive biographies then published which was intended for a young audience. His *Life of Benjamin Franklin*, as indicated on the title page, was "intended for school libraries and general reading." With the rather recent availability of new material, Holley goes beyond the traditional retelling of Franklin's life, frequently utilizing primary sources to supplement the narrative. In one of the most direct treatments of Franklin's religious beliefs, Holley makes no attempt to Christianize Franklin, though Franklin is filled with a religious spirit demonstrated by his moral virtues and actions. While the moralizing and didacticism is minimal, the portrayal of Franklin as the embodiment of industry and frugality is certainly as dominant as in other biographies. It is as if Franklin's possession of the abstracted values of industry, prudence, and integrity have become more or less a given, the biographer feeling little need to convince the reader of their existence. Written primarily for older youth, Holley indulges in less interruptive commentary, sermonizing, or drawing of analogies for the reader.

In his prefatory remarks, Holley indicates that his focus is to show Franklin's "inner life" and "development of character" before the Revolutionary War, to show "what he *was*, as well as what *he did*," all of which allowed him to be of such service to his country (4). From the beginning of the book we sense the importance of the growing success ideology, which gains even greater prominence during the Civil War and Post-Civil War period in the cult of the self-made man. Holley begins,

No man, probably, was ever more eminently and uniformly successful, throughout the whole of a very long life, in attaining the chief objects of human pursuit, than Benjamin Franklin. Of humble origin, with no early opportunities of education beyond the simple rudiments of knowledge, bred a tradesman, and compelled by the narrowness of his circumstances to labor with his own hands for his daily bread, he nevertheless won for himself an ample estate, an illustrious reputation, and distinguished public honors. (9)

This passage suggests a consciousness of the working class, which grows with increased entrepreneurial enthusiasm and is developed further in later biographies. Franklin achieved his success not by luck but by "honest and virtuous enterprise" (9). Although his great

natural abilities helped him achieve eminence, without "his active and persevering spirit, his industrious, frugal, temperate, methodical, and time-saving habits" no talent could have compensated and no real distinction would have been obtained.

The tone of Holley's authorial commentary proves calmer and much less didactic than some of his predecessors. In relating important incidents in Franklin's life, Holley generally quotes from the *Autobiography* and then provides his own observations about the event. For instance, we read the stone wharf escapade in Franklin's own words with Holley's reflection at the conclusion: "This testimony [that 'honesty is the best policy'] is instructive and valuable. The observation made, and the hints received, during those visits of the *boy*, worked like leaven among the thoughts of the *man*" (16). Or, after quoting from Franklin's account of the difficulties which arose between him and his brother James, Holley observes that Franklin resolves to leave Boston since he could no longer tolerate working for his brother and there was little opportunity to work locally. However, when Franklin's own telling may in some way offend the sensitivity of the reader, Holley resorts to his own more euphemistic rendition. In finding a way to leave Boston, Franklin

resorted to his friend Collins, who, at Benjamin's request, engaged a passage for him in a New York sloop then just about to sail; alleging to the captain, as to the reason for his leaving Boston clandestinely, that he had an intrigue with a girl of bad character, whose parents would compel him to marry her, unless he could make his escape in this manner. (36)

The "naughty girl" has become only a "girl of bad character" and the suggestion of pregnancy in the original is lessened to an "intrigue." While the idea of obtaining passage on the ship is clearly Franklin's, the text remains more ambiguous as to whether the pretense of the bad girl was Franklin's or Collins' invention. In either instance, Holley makes no issue of the deception in his commentary.

After he has shown Franklin successfully set up in Philadelphia, Holley discusses Franklin's religious beliefs by quoting from works such as "Articles and Belief and Acts of Religion" and a letter to Ezra Stiles, then elaborating on Franklin's views. In each instance as Franklin's religious activities are discussed, Holley is quick to point to Franklin's moral

character, a character primarily founded upon the qualities of Poor Richard which he has come to represent. Holley's method of defense, an appeal to Franklin's moral virtues and actions, continues through subsequent biographies and sketches as the evangelical impulse to depict Franklin in Christian clothing subsides. This appeal to Franklin's morality rather than Christianity marks an important shift in the image. As the need to defend or discuss Franklin's religious persuasion declines still further towards the end of the century, what remains, independent from the religious context, is a paragon model of extreme morality and virtue. This morality, then, becomes founded on such traits as frugality, integrity, and doing good: "Franklin's frugality proceeded from a high sense of duty. It was the legitimate fruit and conclusive proof of his honesty, and of a just sentiment of self-respect and manly independence" (180). Again we see the use of such terms as "manly independence" as Franklin is more frequently refit to the emerging ideology of manhood.

We see the prominent emergence of manhood as well as moral goodness in an image created by a biographer like Holley where Franklin material such as *The Way to Wealth* is viewed as a repository of moral goodness, common sense, and practical wisdom. It is "so well fitted for the daily guidance of common life" (208), that Holley transcribes in its entirety in his biography. Holley shows that because of these virtues Franklin is "useful to the end," devoting his final "remaining strength to the cause of education and freedom" (468). Upon the death of Franklin, Holley remarks:

Thus terminated a life as remarkable for its early development of the highest traits of character in the midst of the laborious occupations of a tradesman, as for the achievements in philosophy and the services to his country, which rendered it illustrious, and which left the richest lessons of wisdom to every succeeding generation. (468)

Franklin, not above laborious work, rises through his manly moral goodness.

A final mid-century biography I will discuss, Jacob Abbott's *Franklin the Apprentice Boy*, further demonstrates the emerging elements of Franklin's image as the embodiment of industry and perseverance, placing it within a distinctly American framework. As Franklin comes to represent the values of the work ethic, these same

qualities are seen as distinctly American as well. Not that individuals outside America could not or did not possess these traits, but certainly there became a clear association of the spirit of industry with a sense of Americanness. The characterization of America as a place of industry was not an idea new to the nineteenth century. Franklin himself wrote about the pervading spirit of work representative of the United States in "Information to Those Who Would Remove to America," where it is asked of a stranger not "*What is he?*" but *What can he do?*" (*Writings* 977). Moreover, this stress on work adds to the morality of Americans wherein "vices that arise usually from idleness are in a great measure prevented. Industry and constant Employment are great Preservatives of the Morals and Virtue of a Nation. Hence bad Examples to Youth are more rare in America, which must be a comfortable Consideration to Parents" (982).

As the image of Franklin fuses with the characteristic conscientious, hard-working laborer of the nineteenth century, Franklin came to typify the average American. Jacob Abbott, leaving his work as a cleric and educator to become a popular author of juvenile literature, depicts this view of Franklin. Abbott's works reflect his educational philosophy as he carefully orchestrates events in his fiction to create a worthwhile model for children. Most famous for his *Rollo* series, simple stories in Thomas Day's tradition of instructional literature, Abbott wrote a number of biographies among the 180 volumes he authored, his short work on Franklin one of the more popular. For Abbott, Franklin becomes the archetypal American. To make his biography more engaging to young readers, Abbott relies upon invented dialogue in the narrative, an element which begins to move the figure of Franklin toward the realm of fiction.

Abbott's biography begins with a chapter entitled, "Why We Celebrate the Fourth of July," placing Franklin in a historical context and talking generally about patriotism and America. The narrative flashes back from the current time (1855) to the colonial era: "Benjamin Franklin was one of the most distinguished statesmen of America at the period of the Revolution" (13). After additional comments about the Revolutionary War, the

Declaration of Independence, and Fourth of July festivities, Abbott focuses on Benjamin's early life, contrasting the young boy to the able statesmen and public figure. Beneath a picture of young Ben which is arranged next to portrait of Franklin as mature sage, Abbott writes:

Here is a picture of Franklin doing errands for his father when he was a small boy. . . . And now here is another picture of him, representing him as he was in after life, when he became a great statesman, and was employed by government to write dispatches, and negotiate treaties, and to perform other great public functions. Observe how great is the difference. (20)

Continued emphasis is placed on Franklin's indigent beginnings and the lack of opportunity he had, with a comparison then being made to the reader and the great privileges enjoyed in the mid-nineteenth century. For Abbott, Franklin's life and works are in great part the reason for the possibility of a better standard of living.

Your father, reader, is perhaps an independent and thriving man, with constant and profitable employment, and an income sufficient to enable him to provide abundantly for all the wants of his family. There are carpets on the floor in your home, and curtains at the windows, and books upon the shelves, and the children can go to the school to be instructed. Now it is very probable that it is owing to some of Franklin's negotiating or treaties, or to some of the constitution or laws which he helped to frame, that your father, and thousands of others, are in so prosperous a condition. (21)

Not only does Franklin epitomize the "manly independence" discussed earlier (though those precise terms are not used), he is shown, in a very literal sense, to have enabled the reader's father to become "an independent and thriving man," suggestive of entrepreneurial success.

Abbott's biography takes on a allegorical quality as the individuals in the biography are drawn as flat figures, usually either representing of good or bad. Though Franklin may be a little vain and too self-willed, underneath he is genuinely good. Others, such as James, Collins, or Ralph, contrast Franklin's goodness with some flaw or defect. James, for instance, is shown as "a violent man" who would "scold and upbraid [Franklin] in the most harsh and violent manner" (33). When his treatment gets unbearable, Franklin seeks other employment, and New York is the nearest city that employment as a printer might be

found. Collins, drawn as the most wicked individual in the narrative, assists young Franklin in his escape.

One of his companions, a very intelligent and active, but rather a bad boy, proposed a plan to him for getting away. There was a vessel in the harbor going to New York soon, and Collins told Franklin that he thought he could get the captain to take him secretly, by making up a false story to deceive him.

Moralizing upon the deficient moral character of Collins, echoing the "bad boy" motif of earlier writers, Abbott again resorts to invented dialogue.

"I will tell him," said [Collins], "that the reason why you wish to go away is, that your parents insist on your marrying a girl that you do not wish to marry, and that they will prevent your going if they find it out. Then he will let you come secretly, and hide in his vessel, just before he is ready to sail." (40)

As the goodness and badness of the characters becomes clearly defined, we see a simplification of the story and a rewriting of the narrative so as to show Franklin in the most favorable light. The responsibility for the falsehood becomes totally Collins', with no mention that Franklin consented to the deception.

Little is made of the illegality of Franklin's flight or its inappropriateness. Abbott seems well aware that Franklin obviously gained fame and success in spite of this questionable behavior. Abbott makes the point, however, that the road to success would have been faster and more honorable had Franklin stayed in Boston.

Although Franklin ultimately succeeded very well in his plans, and became very prosperous, his success was probably retarded and diminished by his thus running away from home, and not promoted by it. If he had remained with his brother and honorably fulfilled his obligations as apprentice, there is every reason to suppose that he would have risen to eminence in Boston even more rapidly than he did in Philadelphia, and he would in that case spared himself the many hardships, privations, and sufferings which he endured, and particularly the remorse which subsequently stung him so severely, when he thought of his undutiful conduct toward his father and mother. (41)

One consequence of his leaving Boston that caused later problems was the obligation he then felt toward Collins, who Abbott says "was a very bright and active-minded boy, but he was a bad boy in character, or, at any rate, he was beginning to be bad,

and it was very unfortunate for Franklin that he ever had anything to do with him" (97). The friendship with Collins comes to no good as Franklin loans Collins money which he has been entrusted to keep.

By thus associating himself with such a young man as Collins, Franklin got himself into a great deal of difficulty, and brought upon himself much sorrow. The story of this trouble, however, furnishes so striking and perfect illustration of the way in which well-meaning young men often get drawn into difficulty by connecting themselves with the bad. . . . (97)

This lesson is further developed, though to a much less extent, with Franklin's relationship with Ralph in London, who Abbott says "was a very intelligent and well-informed man, but unprincipled, and somewhat inclined to idleness and dissipation. This made him a very dangerous companion" (124-125).

A few more incidents from Franklin's early life are told, such as his temperate behavior in England and being dubbed the "Water-American." But the purpose of Abbott's story is realized as Franklin returns to America and sets up a successful printing business in America. Abbott's two-dimensional characterizations serve to focus the biography on the theme: Franklin's rise to fortune from indigent beginnings results from his goodness and manly labor.

During the whole period of his boyhood and youth, [Franklin] spent his leisure time, not in idle sports or frivolous amusements, but in learning something which might be useful to him in future years, and it was this trait in his character, in no inconsiderable degree, that his subsequent greatness was owing. (160)

This archetypal pattern of the poor boy who makes good will become a more dominant feature after the Civil War as the enthusiasm for the self-made man peaks.

The growing importance of Franklin can be seen in the tangential discussions of him in seemingly unrelated articles and in the continued stress of his Poor Richard-like virtues. Two articles printed in *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian* show how Franklin could be worked into a text. The September 1849 issue contains an article, "Miscellaneous Papers on Chemistry," where mention is made of lightning. The author proceeds to comment on Franklin's role in showing the electrical nature of lightning: "It was reserved

for Dr. Benjamin Franklin, the American Philosopher, to put the matter beyond doubt,--by direct experimentation, indeed, to reduce it to manifested fact" (419). Franklin's place as the "American Philosopher," a term used as far back as Weems but with increasing frequency during the latter half of the century, seems part of a growing interest in and awareness of Franklin's scientific work and achievements. "Philosopher" in this instance refers to a broader definition of scientist who, during the Enlightenment, would have studied and wrote about moral as well as what we now think of as purely "scientific" subjects, reflective of Franklin's interest in issues like moral perfection as well as electricity or ocean currents.

A May 1852 issue of *The Youth's Instructor and Guardian* includes an article entitled "Mr. Hugh Miller on Geology." In a speech given at the Royal Physical Society, Miller's discussion of geology digresses into a summary of recent technological advancements, and his mention of the Watts steam engine leads him to Franklin.

Or who could have surmised, when at nearly the same period, the Philadelphia printer was raising for the first time his silken kite in the fields, that there was an age coming in which, through a knowledge of laws hitherto unknown, but whose existence he was then determining, man would be enabled to bind on his thoughts to the winged lightning, and send them, with an instantaneousness that would annihilate time and space, across land and sea? (218)

Clearly, by this time Franklin has gained place among respected scientists as his renown becomes ever more far reaching. Miller suggests that Franklin's work laid the foundation for many of the marvelous advances of the nineteenth century, such as the telegraph, described poetically as "winged lightning."

Franklin gains a more dominant part in school readers at this time as well, suggesting that his prominence will be increasing in the next generation as they become more familiar with and indoctrinated by the mythic image. Noah Webster's *Biography For the Use of Schools* appeared in 1830, giving an eleven-page rewriting of the *Autobiography*. A pre-Civil War edition of a *McGuffey Reader* contains a discussion of Franklin's oratorical powers in a selection written by William Wirt, "Colloquial Powers of

Franklin." Wirt, who claims to have spent a few weeks with Franklin at the home of a mutual friend, argues that Franklin was most persuasive in "domestic circles" due to his wit and good sense, making little effort at eloquence in public situations (Buxbaum 130). An 1850 southern reader provides a more typical view of Franklin, but with a tone suggesting the growing emphasis on success.

Do you despise your humble station and repine that Providence has not placed you in some nobler sphere? Murmur not against the dispensations of an all-wise Creator! . . . "An honest man's the noblest work of God." . . . press forward and the prize is yours! It was thus with Franklin--it can be thus with you. He strove for the prize, and he won it! So may you! (qtd. in Mile 126)

Franklin here epitomizes self-reliance and independence, traits needed in an increasingly competitive society. Those of "humble station," according to this selection from *The Southern Reader and Speaker*, should not despair that their state must ever remain low, but are encouraged to press forward, so, in words similar to the Apostle Paul, they may "win the prize."

Short pieces in periodical and anthologized works continued to appear as well, continuing to stress the industrious, prudent image of the man. An anonymously written article, "Sketches of American Character, Franklin" (the title reflecting Franklin's representativeness as the typical American), appearing in *The Monthly Repository and Library of Entertaining Knowledge* labels Franklin as "one of the greatest benefactors of America" (159). A short sketch of Franklin's life is summed up with an overall judgment of his character, presumably the reason for his influence and his status as a benefactor. "His industry, frugality, activity, intelligence; his plans for improving the condition of the providence, for introducing better systems of education; his municipal services, made him an object of attention . . . [and] contributed to render him an object of admiration" (161,194). In her *Boy's Reading-Book*, Mrs. L. H. Sigourney includes an article, "Dr. Benjamin Franklin," that along with other selections she feels will encourage "lessons of republican simplicity, of the value of time, of the rewards of virtue, of the duties of this

life, as they take hold on the happiness of the next" (1-2). Sigourney attributes much of Franklin's character and inclination toward industry to his early reading of Mather's "Essays to do Good," with Franklin purported to crediting the work as laying the foundation in his mind for his later philanthropy (206). No mention is made in her account of Franklin's apprenticeship. He leaves Boston merely because he has little opportunity to improve himself.

Not meeting from his brother any assistance, in his pursuit for improvement, and finding him neither as kind or as liberal as he had reason to expect, he left him and went to New York, and Philadelphia, in search of employment at his trade.

Sigourney places Franklin's whole life in the context of labor, as industry takes precedence over all else.

Sketches of this nature flourish as Franklin continues to be viewed as the embodiment of Poor Richard. In *A Brief Memoir of the Life of Dr. Benjamin Franklin* (1833), Franklin's commitment to work and prudence establish him as the model that youthful readers can follow to get ahead. An article entitled "Franklin" written for the *Boys' and Girls' Magazine* (1843) shows how industry, obedience, and beneficence lead to Franklin's greatness, a fame which never recedes due to his continued adherence to these virtues. Samuel Hutchins provides a moralistic rendition of the Franklin story in *Benjamin Franklin: A Book for the Young and Old, for All* (1852). Readers are encouraged to appreciate and emulate the qualities of Poor Richard which Franklin possessed and learn the lessons the life of Franklin teaches (Buxbaum 83, 97, 113).

As the image of Franklin becomes more mythic towards the end of this period and grows to epitomize the traits associated both with Poor Richard and the urban laborer of antebellum America, we find one fictional treatment of the colonial leader precursory to the early twentieth-century reaction of the man in Herman Melville's 1855 novel *Israel Potter: His Fifty Years of Exile*. Though his book was not intended for children and was not most likely common reading even among adults of the time, Melville is playing off a stereotypic

view of Franklin--his industry and prudence--which suggests the extent the Poor-Richard view of Franklin had become ingrained. Caricatures work only when an image is firmly established, and the maxim-quoting character of *Israel Potter* lacks the feeling and emotion to be a complete man.

In a short book intended for children, Nathaniel Hawthorne in *Biographical Stories for Children* (1842) does not cast Franklin as a character in a fiction but uses fictional context to tell Franklin's story. Hawthorne relates incidents about the lives of famous people by creating a sick boy whose father entertains him by telling stories, biographical ones being deemed the most suitable. The book proceeds with conversations between Edward Temple and his father. Hawthorne focuses on two events of Franklin's life, the incidents of paying too much for a whistle and the building of the stone wharf. In the stone wharf building Franklin is shown to be "the soul of the enterprise," with his "mechanical genius" serving to find ways to transport the stones and build a sturdy wharf (112, 116). Of course, the moral is appropriately drawn that "honesty is the best policy." Edward's father sums up Franklin's early years by saying, "In this way our friend Benjamin spent his boyhood and youth, until, on account of some disagreement with his brother, he left his native town, and went to Philadelphia" (133).

Edward wants to hear more, not because he is more impressed with Franklin than others, but because "he was a Yankee boy" (135). As they discuss what made Franklin famous, they agree that *Poor Richard's Almanack*

did more than any thing else, towards making him familiarly known to the public. As the writer of those proverbs, which Poor Richard was supposed to utter, Franklin became the counselor and household friend of almost every family in America. (136)<sup>5</sup>

Edward says he has read some of the proverbs but dislikes them for "they are all about getting money, or saving it" (137). His father responds that "they were suited to the condition of the country; and their effect, upon the whole, has doubtless been good,--although they teach men but a very small portion of their duties" (137). Hawthorne also

worked with the Franklinian theme of working to get ahead in the short story, "My Kinsman, Major Molineux" (1832), where young Robin finds that he must rely upon his own merits, not those of a wealthy relative and benefactor, for success. But his depiction of Franklin in his biographical sketch for children suggests at best an ambivalence towards the national hero. No doubt the maxims of Poor Richard's had unpleasant implications to Hawthorne, particularly during the years when circumstances caused him to become a hack writer, producing works like *Biographical Stories* to survive.

Certainly Franklin's depiction in fiction along with the accounts found in periodicals, biographies, and anthologies all point to the wide acceptance of Franklin representing the virtues of industry, frugality, and honesty. The image of the previous period derived from the *Autobiography* and *The Way to Wealth* has genuinely fused with the figure, never really to be separated again throughout the nineteenth century. At mid-century, as the stress placed upon the work ethic increases, we see the secular ideas of success slowly temper the religious elements of the image as Franklin comes to embody the prevalent success ideology and typify a rise to fame and fortune from obscure beginnings. This archetypal motif of the "poor boy made good" grows increasingly important as the self-made man becomes a dominant image and model for emulation, trends we will see further developed in the Civil War/post-Civil War period.

#### Notes

1. The borrowing of and adding to *The Way to Wealth* by other authors to promote self-help and hard work can be seen as early as 1796. In a letter to a co-author discussing the possibility of printing a new almanac, Mason Weems discusses coming out with his own "Franklin" almanac, "Franklin because it would contain, among other things, a copy of *The Way to Wealth* (Letters II, 85). An 1838 edition of *The Way to Wealth* printed in Ithaca, New York, had added such things to Franklin's 1758 preface as "Necessary Hints to Those Who Would Be Rich" and "The Way to Make Money Plenty in Every Man's Pocket," as well as three short pieces "Wise and Ignorant," "Rich and Poor," and "Justice." An undated edition of this same time shows how printers also simplified some of Franklin's material for children. The subtitle, "To Be Followed by those who would be Good Children and Rich and Wise Men," suggests that being good and wise depends upon following Franklin's maxims. This edition intersperses woodcuts with quotations of Poor

Richard, while keeping a narrative line through editorial commentary. An 1850 edition along with an undated English edition further show the evolutionary process of *The Way to Wealth*. The 1850 edition adds material not only for children, but for adults who may read the work as well. The title page serves as a type of table of contents listing the material contained in the chapbook: "Advice to a Young Tradesman," "Hints to those that would be Rich," "Poor Richard's Address," "The Whistle; a True Story (Written to his Nephew)," "The Advantages of Drunkenness," "Maxims for Married Gentlemen," "Maxims for Married Ladies," "Causes of Men Wanting Money," and "Directions how Persons may supply Themselves with Money at all Times." The English edition, edited by Bob Short (an obvious pseudonym), adds more non-Franklin material to the original text. Titled, *Franklin's Way to Wealth or, Poor Richard Improved*, this edition includes as a subtitle, *To Which is added Alphabetical Maxims; Worthy the Remembrance and Regard of All*. Short also includes a section, "How to Make Much of a Little, Addressed to the Industrious Poor," which suggests ways the poor may make do with what they have. Short's alphabetical maxims (Poor Richard-type maxims alphabetized by the first word of the saying) add his own philosophy to the Franklin canon of sayings as original maxims are interspersed with Franklin's: "Better be alone, than in bad Company," or "Industry pays Debts, but Despair increaseth them" (26). On the back end cover of the book, Short reflects on Franklin's writing, alludes to an incident in Franklin's autobiography, and admonishes children to follow the advice contained in the chapbook:

Dear Children. It is impossible to peruse the precepts of honest Richard Saunders without instruction, and that you may know their additional recommendation, you are informed that their author was DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, originally a journeyman printer, who contented himself with drinking water, whilst his shopmates were intoxicated with spirituous liquors and beer. (end cover)

He then asks the readers what they feel resulted from this abstinence. He replies that while Franklin "by prudence and integrity, rose from obscurity to a statesman," those shopmates no doubt ended up in a parish poor house. Franklin's success, according to Short, "was effected by a strict attention to the Proverbs of 'Poor Richard.'" This use and reworking of *The Way to Wealth* continues through Twain's Gilded Age when the popularity of Franklin material peaks.

2. This edition of *The Life of Benjamin Franklin* underwent numerous reprints and was combined with other works such as *The Life of George Washington*. In addition to the original publishers, Collins & Hannay, it appeared in various editions by different publishers (for instance, an 1839 London edition, *The Lives of Franklin and Washington*, published by Thomas Tegg). Interestingly, Samuel Griswold Goodrich, user of the pseudonym Peter Parley, denied authorship of the work even though a copyright had been obtained in his name. An expanded biography, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: Thomas Cowperthwait & Co.), based on the 1832 edition, appeared in 1842. In both instances, Parley focuses on Franklin's rise to fortune and the accomplishments that resulted from his early adherence to Poor Richardian virtues.

3. The difficulty in dealing with some of the biographies of this period is demonstrated by a book such as *Life of Benjamin Franklin, Embracing Anecdotes Illustrative of His Character* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston, 1846). In his bibliography (*Benjamin Franklin 1721-1906, A Reference Guide* [Boston: G. K. Hall, 1983]), Buxbaum lists a book of the identical title, different publisher and publication date, in an 1836 entry. While the books are obviously different according to Buxbaum's annotations (I was unable to consult a copy of the 1836 biography) and while it was not uncommon to have anonymously published biographies with the same title, these two

coincidentally have the same number of pages. Also, the 1846 edition which I consulted is part of a Young American's Library series, the same series as the 1836 edition, while the 1846 edition Buxbaum annotates is listed as part of a Biographical School Series. From the annotations, my 1846 edition is the same as the one Buxbaum lists as the 1846 edition. In my work at the Baldwin Library, however, I came across another 1846 biography of a different title, a *Pictorial Life of Benjamin Franklin* (Philadelphia: Lindsay & Blakiston). Upon inspection it proved to be identical in every respect to the 1846 *Life of Benjamin Franklin*. To show how the matter can grow even more complicated, an 1889 biography, *Poor Richard's Story. A Young Folk's Life of Benjamin Franklin*, published in New York as part of a Daring Deeds Series, lists an author as Henry C. Watson. This volume also, upon comparison, proved identical to the anonymously printed 1846 *Life of Benjamin Franklin*.

4. I am indebted to David Leverenz and the insights I gained concerning issue of manhood through many conversations on the subject. This passage suggests a variation of the declining importance of parentage, as a subtle shift from paternal deference to individual autonomy surfaces in an ideology of manhood. Further reflecting a change from artisan and patrician values to entrepreneurial competition, the emphasis on "manliness" suggests an awareness of the uneasiness caused by social mobility and a volatile marketplace. Beginning as a battlefield code (reinforcing the creed of "fight not flight"), manhood becomes an ideology of the work force as man's sense of self becomes integrally tied to his work. Accompanying increased competition and greater opportunities for mobility lies a fundamental threat of failing. With the decline of evangelical religion which assured other worldly comfort in the face of risk, new strategies were adopted to recover from disappointment, most notably here with the stress on manhood. Without the deference implicit in the religious dogma of the early century, men relied upon their manhood, not on God, for strength in peril. Franklin, whose success comes from his own perseverance and hard work, begins to be seen as an exemplar of manly independence essential to success, though often stressed in these narratives as self-reliance. This aspect intermittently surfaces through the remainder of the mid-century becoming increasingly strident in the post-Civil War era with the rise of the self-made man. For a more extended treatment of manhood and its effect on nineteenth-century writers, see Leverenz's forthcoming book, *Manhood and the American Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1989).

5. By the middle of the century the name Poor Richard had gained prominence that an author of children's stories adopts it for a fictional character to discourage idleness in her readers. Mrs. Lovechild in *Poor Richard and Other Stories, for the Young* (Philadelphia: Hayes & Zell, 1856), ignorantly uses the name "Poor Richard" for a destitute old man who never gained the fame or fortune the famous maxims promise. Richard, now in his advanced years, stands begging outside a rundown hut, dressed in rags, having nothing to eat. He catches the attention of two children, Frank and Mary, and they stop to talk. Richard tells them his story.

I was a naughty boy, and so grew up to be a naughty man. . . . I liked to please myself, and have my own way best. I was so idle, I would not work. . . . I wandered idly from one place to another, earning a few pence now and then, just to keep myself from starving. But instead of feeling any sorrow for what I had done, I grew worse and worse. (67-68)

By the time the children meet him, he is too old and weak to change. In the story Richard is the antithesis of everything Franklin's persona has come to represent. The adjective "poor" enters in when the children later have cause to remember his condition which serves as a warning against their own potentially deviant behavior. "They did not soon forget his sad story; and when either of them was naughty, and did not like to obey, the other would

say, 'Remember poor Richard!'" (69-68). Here the descriptor "poor" takes on the meaning of regret and warning as well as poverty.

## CHAPTER 3

### CIVIL WAR AND POST-CIVIL WAR (1860-1879): CONTINUING TRENDS AND POPULAR NONFICTION

During the era of the Civil War and the years following, we see the final inseparable fusion of Ben Franklin as Poor Richard. By this time the notion of Franklin as the paragon of industry, frugality, honesty, and perseverance becomes so embedded into the image that despite what other changes and additions made to it, this aspect remains intact. What occurs, however, are more subtle changes as values and attitudes shift, paralleling economic and social changes occurring in society. We can see the broad appeal of Franklin by the appearance of material even in such specialized publications as *The Catholic's Youth's Magazine*, a magazine published to provide "unbiased" reading material for Catholic children. The September 1860 edition contains a two-page sketch on Franklin, emphasizing Poor Richard and his injunction against idleness. Major incidents of Franklin's life are summarized as he is depicted as a hard-working printer. The anonymous author says, "After spending nearly seven years in the office of his brother, and having a thorough knowledge of the art of printing as then practiced, [Franklin] left home to try his fortune . . ." (33). Franklin arrives in Philadelphia with no job, but because of his dedication to hard work and previous learning, he is able to find work and grows in skill and distinction as he establishes himself in business. Franklin's ever-present busyness is described: "While other men were sleeping, or spending time in idleness, FRANKLIN was engaged in study, or trying experiments" (33).

The name Franklin itself had come to take on significance by this time that George Hillard uses it metonymically to designate an array of qualities he wishes to inculcate in the audience of his Franklin readers. He says in discussing the title of his *Franklin Fifth*

*Reader* (1877) that the book has been named "in honor of an illustrious son of Boston, forever associated with her public schools through medals devised in his will" (62).<sup>1</sup> The use of Franklin's name for a reader had begun as early as 1802, when Samuel Willard dedicated his book, *The Franklin Primer*, to the "memory of Doct. Benjamin Franklin, . . . a man whose manner of life from his youth up, is worthy the most minute observation, and imitation of the rising generation" (Rosenbach 113). The use of Franklin's name in this manner continued until the end of the century where it was also appears in satiric works, such as a primer which spoofs the elements of industry and frugality Franklin had come to represent. While the satiric 1878 *Benjamin Franklin Primer* contains none of Franklin's own writing or any biographical information on him, the lessons on hard work and conscientious saving satirize the Franklin/Poor Richard-type lessons contained in traditional readers. The title page does, however, have a statue of Franklin, though it bears little or no resemblance to the historical figure but stands like a Napoleonic figure, posed with a large hat and a hand in his coat, perhaps suggesting the status and dominance Franklin had in lessons promoting work. The primer contains several invented testimonials from leading figures of the time attesting to its worth: "It makes a fine show" (P. T. Barnum); "There is nothing superior to it but the Herald" (James G. Bennett); "My children cry for it" (Brigham Young); "I think it's bully--big stuff" (Sitting Bull); and so forth. The preface claims that the primer is a good-natured satire on beginning readers in common use, and "is scarcely less absurd than books in which our children receive their first instruction."

The continued appearance of Franklin material in school readers shows the impulse to provide children with a model from which to pattern one's life. During this period we see the continuation of an earlier trend as little emphasis is placed upon religion, as religion itself becomes more a matter of morals than theology with all things demonstrating a moral lesson. For instance, the diligent work of the ant in gathering food for hard times demonstrates moral responsibility rather than instinctual behavior while the careless behavior of the grasshopper brings just punishment when in winter hunger abounds and

insufficient stores are too be had. With the moral nature of the universe pervading popular thought and seen as "the base of American culture," financial success in the business world or in any endeavor is seen resulting directly from good character and as a consequence of virtue (Elson 337-338). With this type of logic operational, Franklin becomes a prime exemplar of moral virtue with its accompanying success and is put forth as such in readers and anthologies aimed at children.

One of the most popular and well-known series, the *McGuffey Readers*, frequently included quotes from Franklin. These readers, approved texts in thirty-seven states from 1836 until the end of the century, sold over 122 million copies. William Holmes McGuffey admired Franklin and borrowed freely from Poor Richard in his lessons, though in most instances quotes are not attributed to Franklin. McGuffey's intent in his readers was to teach honesty, frugality, and industry (Wecter 311). Richard D. Moser in his study of *McGuffey Readers* sees one of McGuffey's greatest feats as the complete integration of Christian and middle class ideals. While overt religious discussions are not as common as in works such as Weems, the moral tone of the readers remains high, with the religious devotion of such leaders as Franklin or Washington an assumed given. In speaking of these two early leaders, McGuffey asks, "What other two men whose lives belong to the eighteenth century of Christendom have left a deeper impression upon the age in which they lived, and upon all after time?" (Moser 6). The readers stressed such virtues as honesty, integrity, thriftiness, and industry, virtues integral to religion--to be more desired than gold. Yet, paradoxically, the reward of such virtues was gold (Moser 105, 118).

With Franklin representing many of the values promoted by McGuffey, surprisingly few lengthy selections by or about Franklin appear in the readers. Franklin's primary influence and presence is seen in the anonymously included maxims lifted from Poor Richard. It is not until the post-Civil War years that a *McGuffey Reader* contains a selection of any length from Franklin's *Autobiography*. The *McGuffey's Sixth Eclectic Reader* excerpts Franklin's famous entry into Philadelphia, stressing his rise to fortune.

The piece is prefaced with an introduction focusing on Franklin's business career with little mention of his diplomatic services. The stress on Franklin as a model of diligent work remains: "His life is a noble example of the results of industry and perseverance" (431). More prominent space is given to Franklin in such readers as Sanders' *The New School Reader: Fourth Book* (1866), a competitor to McGuffey, which found the reprinting of *The Way to Wealth* in its entirety valuable to encourage moral behavior and monetary rewards which accompany upright living.

A history of the United States by Mrs. Lewis B. Monroe, entitled *The Story of Our Country* (1876), published in connection with America's centennial, more overtly suggests the exemplary nature of Franklin. Characteristic of the subtle new dimensions of the Franklin image, Monroe stresses the Americanness of her subject, an aspect particularly prominent in late-century biographies. Monroe invents a mother who retells the history of the United States to her two young children, Will and Lizzie. In a chapter titled, "How a Poor Boy Became a Famous Man," Monroe recounts Benjamin's early years and clearly suggests that following his example can bring success. The mother of the story is constantly seeing that her children learn "much that will be useful to them in after life" (5), and the story of Franklin ranks high in what is considered useful.

Just so surely as the needed rain and sunshine come to gladden the growing trees in spring-time, so surely did the men appear who seemed to have been born and fitted to help America in her times of greatest danger. One of these men was Benjamin Franklin, born in Boston in the year 1706. (147)

While this introduction would seem to suggest a discussion concerning the American Revolution and the creation of the United States, Monroe does not deal with any of Franklin's activities connected with the war or the events leading up to it. While a later chapter discusses his involvement in the French and Indian War with General Braddock, this initial chapter focuses exclusively on Franklin's rise to fortune, the example it provides to others, and, by inference, the importance these traits had in securing the greatness of America. While Monroe recounts incidents such as the building of the stone wharf to show

Franklin's growing realization that anything dishonest is not really useful, the main emphasis centers on Franklin successfully establishing himself as a printer. As Franklin enters Philadelphia for the first time, Will observes, "Such a boy as that wasn't long without work, I know" (152). In a dialogue among the three characters, the secret of Franklin's success is explained.

WILL. How Franklin did succeed in everything!

LIZZIE. I suppose that was because he did everything so well.

MOTHER. Most likely every one would succeed if he were as upright, industrious, prudent, and saving as Franklin was. (153)

Monroe's not so hidden agenda, one we will see more fully exploited in the fictional narratives of writers like Alger, suggests that if children develop the moral fortitude of Franklin, the success he achieved is within their grasp.

A selection on Franklin in the *Saint Nicholas Story Book* (1875) takes a similar approach to that of Monroe. As the story of Franklin's success is recounted, the implication is that anyone can do likewise through conscientious effort. The short article "Benjamin Franklin" begins with the characteristic comparison between his lowly beginnings and the later height of fame and fortune achieved.

The life of Franklin is one of the most extraordinary instances on record of what can be accomplished by study, resolution, and a conscientious nurture of the faculties. He was born in a humble sphere; he began his career as an apprentice; he mastered almost all the branches of knowledge, aided by his own perseverance and determination; and he rose to become arbiter of nations, the companion of sovereigns; he ascended step by step from the humble printer's apprentice to a position the most exalted of any in the world. (44)

The standard events of Part One of the *Autobiography* are summarized with author simply glossing over any of the problematic "errata" Franklin discusses in his own narrative. As Franklin departs Boston we are told that the "situation becoming intolerable, he abruptly left Boston, and started secretly for New York" (48).

The concluding paragraph reinforces the sentiment of the beginning as we are reminded of the key to Franklin's success.

Thus full of years and honors died this remarkable man, the most striking example, perhaps, on record of what energy, virtue, and industry will accomplish in advancing the fortunes of their possessor. (53)

The stress of this sketch as well as many similar pieces of this period is similar to those of the mid-century in that Franklin is equated with industry, honesty, and frugality. But a subtle change begins to occur as Franklin more frequently comes to epitomize what the nineteenth century calls the self-made man.

While the term "self-made" in referring to a man who gained financial success dates from much earlier than the Civil War, it is really through the years following the war as we approach the period of time dubbed by Twain the "Gilded Age" that the importance of the self-made man peaks.<sup>2</sup> A concomitant stress is placed upon self-education, self-improvement, and self-reliance through sermons, tracts, self-help manuals, lectures, and the like as the theme of the archetypal rise to fortune inundates biography and fiction. Numerous trends, both economic and ideological, come together to emphasize the importance of common sense and hard work and their place in obtaining success. Though the genesis of this and many societal trends dates to much earlier periods, they culminate during the Civil War and post-Civil War period, representative of characteristic attitudes infused into Franklin's image at this time. Such forces as industrialization, improved technology, urbanization, a growing consciousness of a definable middle class, and the proliferation of self-help material all work together to further mythicize Franklin and promote the importance of his image in the national consciousness.

One of the most significant events in nineteenth-century America to affect post-Civil War America was growing industrialization and urbanization. Beginning at the end of the eighteenth century and continuing through the nineteenth century, industry steadily advanced in scale and capitalization, bringing with it a change from an agrarian- to market-based economy, especially in the Northeast. Michael Gilmore suggests, "A variety of factors combined to fuel a runaway expansion of economy. Poor transportation facilities, the dearth of capital for investment, and chronic labor shortages had inhibited growth in the

early national period" (2). During the early part of the nineteenth century, an increase in improved land routes and a vigorous program of canal and railroad construction provided the way for raw materials and goods to be transported easily and cheaply. Increased exports helped finance these projects and, along with an increase in the number of banks, made money and credit more readily available. With more capital to invest and greater accessibility through improved transportation, a rising birth rate and influx of immigrants provided the necessary labor conducive to manufacturing expansion (Gilmore 2). As such changes forced more from an artisan and farming lifestyle, the character of enterprise changed. People began producing for profit not use. These factors along with remarkable technological discoveries and applications provided the means for industrial growth.

This rapid growth changed the place and method of producing goods. Manufactured goods became more common than those produced by hand as production moved from the household to the market. The late eighteenth century had been the age of the artisan. Craftsmen produced goods in family workshops, with the whole family participating in the process and usually an apprentice or two joining the production effort. Journeymen and apprentices shared concern for one another and for the goods they produced. Industrialization transformed both the work place and the dynamics of the working family and all but destroyed the system of apprenticeship as the movement from domestic to larger scale workshops and factory production increased. Also, along with the shift from the artisan lifestyle the size and accessibility of urban markets and the invention of more efficient farming equipment changed the nature of farming, encouraging farmers to grow cash-crops, replacing subsistence farming and the previously independent lifestyle of the farm family. These shifts caused more of the work force to sell their labor instead of working at home, as the system of large-scale manufacturing characteristic of the post-Civil War time began to replace the self-sufficient orientation of the eighteenth century. (Gilmore 2-3).

Though the commercial, industrial, and urban revolutions created tensions and problems, new opportunities came to vast numbers of people. Forced to compete in the labor market, children of farmers and artisans found professions differing from those of their parents, often leaving their homes and birthplaces to find work. With the change in economic forces, whole segments of society shifted as literally tens of thousands of Americans moved from familiar family and village settings into environments of novel institutions and relationships, often seeking to improve their financial and societal standing (typified in the farm boy becoming a counting house clerk or the journeyman becoming a wage earner). As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg points out,

The unattached youth of this transitional period were not social protesters but, rather, loose young women and men cast off by a declining agrarian economy, at sea in a new commercial and urban environment. Their own desire was to establish themselves securely within the new bourgeois hierarchy. (144)

Those who did not inherit family farms or become part of family businesses went to larger cities where expanding industries demanded more labor (with the commonly accepted but not always true notion that in the city the struggling, displaced worker had a greater opportunity for success). These unattached workers seeking new vocations composed the nucleus for what became the growing middle class, a development related to the commercial and industrial revolutions.

While neither Franklin's own life nor his created mythic image typify the industrialization of the nineteenth century, certain aspects of Franklin's personality do become part of the pro-industrialist's frame of reference. Most supporters of industrialization hailed economic and technological changes as a form of progress, and Franklin as scientist, inventor, and man of the Enlightenment represents a type of progressiveness with his belief in the useful application of knowledge. Consequently, increased attention centers on Franklin's interest in science. The use and importance of the term "American philosopher" appearing as early as Weems, grows more common in the narrative from the Civil War on, reflective of this association with science. Franklin,

thinking of himself as a natural philosopher, felt the term to be much more inclusive than that of scientist. As Charles White observes,

the former term described a man whose interests included God, nature, human behavior, and the universe within a single attitude, shaped by scientific investigation. In the eighteenth century scientists were usually more specialists in physics or chemistry or biology. The natural philosopher used the principles and conclusions of reason, accompanied by experimental data, to make statements about man's place in the world. Pure scientific theory that could not be embodied in experience would be meaningless and irrelevant. (110)

White continues that

Franklin's establishment of a fire company, his suggestions for new rules of conduct, his ideas about forms of governments were as much the fruits of his science as axioms and postulates about sea currents or electrical theory. (110)

Corollary to the reference of Franklin as a philosopher is the characteristic use of the title "doctor," the usage suggestive of the degree of eminence he achieved in his later life from his scientific endeavors, often used as a striking contrast to his humble beginning. While Franklin received honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, and the College of William and Mary, it was the conferral of the degree of doctor of law (LL.D.) from the University of St. Andrews on February 12, 1759, which gave him the only title he ever had, resulting in his subsequent appellation, *Dr.* Franklin. Oxford University followed suit by awarding a degree of doctor of civil laws *honoris causa* in April of 1762 (Van Doren 281-282, 300). Through Franklin's later life and during the early nineteenth century, the use of the title "Dr." indicates the elevated status Franklin had attained as an exemplar and model, particularly for children. In many of the biographies and sketches of this period and of the late century, the aspect of "Dr." Franklin as scientist receives emphasis, even if it is no more than a catalogue of his inventions and accomplishments, suggestive of the "fruits" nineteenth-century society would see wrought by industrialism.

While Franklin's own beginnings represented an artisan lifestyle rather than a successful entrepreneur, his positive attitude toward science, especially applied technology and gadgetry, reinforced a positive attitude towards industrial growth and the changes it

wrought. Moreover, Franklin represented the urban ideal of "coming to the city to make one's fortune." Typically, the struggling nineteenth-century worker came from a rural background to the city and achieved success through his efforts. Though Franklin came from Boston (not the family farm) to Philadelphia, his entrance into Philadelphia exemplifies the friendless, penniless youth of the nineteenth century who left family for employment opportunities outside his known locale. By this time Franklin's entrance into Philadelphia had become one of the most important narratives of his mythic image, perhaps being the most often quoted or related event recounted in short articles and sketches. Franklin's sense of displacement and making it on his own become central to the nineteenth-century representative model of youth facing the challenges of a growing industrialized and urbanized society.

Perhaps more important to the popularization of Franklin than the increasing industrialization and urbanization is the related phenomenon of a growing new middle class and its manifestation in the myth of the self-made man. Recent research suggest that the nineteenth century serves as the generative period in America for the creation and rise of a middle class (Boyer 61; Ryan iii). One of the difficulties in discussing the middle class and its formation is that it was and is composed of a variety of individuals representing diverse professions: farmers, merchants, ministers, and professional men. Robertson describes the general make-up of the class as follows:

The new middle class grew gradually and almost imperceptibly in the nineteenth century. It is an urban class. Its economic base is the complex structure of industrialism. It is not an entrepreneurial bourgeoisie, although it includes entrepreneurs. Nor is it made up of the peasants and petite bourgeoisie--farmers, merchants, planters--who dominated the agrarian society of early-nineteenth-century America, although they, too, are included. (258)

Even with the diversity of the middle class, it maintained a sense of shared attitudes and beliefs. These shared values (many of which Franklin came to typify and represent) lay the foundation of the nineteenth-century middle class and help explain how and why Franklin gained such widespread acceptance and reverence.

The growing dominance of the middle class during the nineteenth century affected the society as a whole. As Daniel Rodgers points out, the values of the middle class, especially in the North, set the standards for society as a whole (15). As the middle class esteemed what has become known as the self-made man, the values Franklin represented were further emphasized and revered by others as well. Though the term "self-made man" was not coined until the early nineteenth century, the notion of upward social mobility dates much earlier. Benjamin Franklin, however, becomes one of the first and foremost exemplars of the ideal's American manifestation, what has become known as the transformation from "rags-to-riches" (Wyllie 9-10). In the American version of upward mobility, material acquisition became central. With a large portion of America still unsettled during the nineteenth century, many felt that with its resources and democratic regard for the equality of all men, America could provide to any the opportunity to become self-reliant and successful through individual effort, a belief representing one of the most cherished ideals of America, still held to today. Supporting the ideology of self-reliance emerging within the cult of the self-made man, the rhetoric of manhood and manliness in literature and nonfiction continues. For the diverse group of mobile individuals in the nineteenth century, uprooted and seeking ways to provide for themselves and their families, this ideal of opportunity and success proved especially appealing, with the ideological frame of manly independence buttressing the ideal of self-made success.

One difficulty in our discussion of the self-made man, however, is the variety of different meanings it had to individuals in the nineteenth century, thought Cawelti suggests that "it seems reasonable to conclude that [the self-made man] persisted as a popular hero and as a central symbol of American society because Americans were able to synthesize, under his aegis, many conflicting strands of belief and aspiration" (4), a characteristic of most myths. This same representativeness in Franklin served also to sustain his enduring place as the American prototype of the self-made man.

From the competing versions of the success ideal, some recurring themes seem present. Foremost to the ideal was the largely Protestant tradition which stressed hard work, frugality, and honesty, elements we have seen fused to the image of Franklin through earlier biographies and sketches. The actual mention of the term self-made in connection with Franklin came early in the century soon after the word's coining. In a short sketch of Franklin in the 1839 anthology, *Interesting Biographical Sketches of Distinguished Men*, we are told Franklin "was a self-made man, and self-taught. From the state of poverty and obscurity, he raised himself to a state of affluence and celebrity" (4). While little elaboration is given beyond this, with no specific details to show how Franklin was self-made, certainly identification in the tradition is made. The account ends with this reminder to the reader: "his life is well worth the perusal of every youth" (4).

In a short work published in 1850, *Success in Life. The Mechanic*, Mrs. L. C. Tuthill chronicles the lives of four self-made "mechanics," Franklin among them. The inclusion of Franklin as a rising mechanic defines his self-made status in terms of applied science, reflecting in a more subtle way the growing interest in science. Designed as a manual to encourage boys and young men in mechanical pursuits, Tuthill's book devotes four chapters to Franklin, whom she lists as the first example of a self-made man. She begins her discussion of Franklin by asserting that "self-education is allowed to be the most effective kind of education," and that "perhaps no better example of self-education could be offered for the study of the young than that of the printer, Benjamin Franklin" (51). Since, says Tuthill, most are familiar with the lives of famous countrymen (Franklin among the most famous), she does not intend to give a connected biography. Rather, Tuthill selectively focuses her discussion on those traits and experiences from Franklin's life which demonstrate her purpose.

After quoting generous portions of the *Autobiography*, Tuthill rhetorically asks what means brought about Franklin's success. She then answers as follows:

A knowledge of men and things, far beyond what is usual at his age, acquired by *observation, reading, and study*. Habits of *temperance, economy, and self-reliance*, and added to these, *accurate knowledge of a good trade*, and skill gained by the practice of it. (62)

Tuthill stresses the "good trade" in that she is clearly addressing a working class readership. Possessing the remarkable traits enumerated, Franklin meets "trials which would have daunted and entirely overwhelmed a less resolute spirit" (62). This manual shows how authors adapt the increasingly mythic image to their specific audience, Tuthill's version depicting Franklin as a self-made man. By implication, success is for anyone who develops these same characteristics.

An anthology of biographical accounts published near the beginning of the Civil War also suggests the growing popularity of the self-made man. John MacGilchrist in his *Men Who Have Made Themselves: Whence They Started. How They Journeyed. What They Reached* (n.d.) devotes a section to Franklin. Following in the tradition of those texts used to provide worthy examples for youth, MacGilchrist asserts there is a natural curiosity in "the histories of those who have started in life unknown and unbefriended, who have made themselves great, and left legacies of knowledge and example to their fellow men" (vii). Suggesting his book is not unique, MacGilchrist continues: "This is one of many books designed to supply this laudable demand, and to stir young minds to emulation and endeavor" (vii). While later writers completely divorce the notion of financial success from a religious orientation, the preface reminds young readers that

the men to whom the title "self-made" has been given, have been the very first thankfully to acknowledge their perfect dependence on Almighty *God* for all they have been able to do and become; and, next to that, the valuable help they have obtained from other men in their achievement of their greatness. (viii)

With the secularization of the Protestant work ethic still in process, a concern with overt religious issues lingers.

During the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the notion that individual action and effort brought success replaced or at least eroded the idea that fortune came strictly by divine decree (a more secular variation of the Puritan belief of election and

grace). Through the first half of the nineteenth century the importance of individual effort grew as the emphasis on God diminished and the value of competition increased. By the end of the Civil War and post-Civil War period, the sense of Providence or the Divine manifest itself almost strictly in the sense of morality. Whereas a man's success would be initially interpreted as a sign of righteousness, gradually it grew to be equated only with moral virtue and strength. MacGilchrist's attitude shows a remnant of orthodox religion clinging to the more secular and entrepreneurial notion of success.

MacGilchrist follows the traditional pattern of depicting the lowness of Franklin's beginning to contrast his great achievements and the level to which he rose, a crucial juxtaposition for the self-made man. Like Weems, MacGilchrist depicts the candle-making business of Franklin's father as a "filthy and malodorous business," one Franklin did not "relish" (256). The moral strength and integrity Franklin relied on to rise above his situation is attributed in part to his father, Josiah.

After all, it turned out an advantage to Benjamin that he was brought to work at home for a while; for, although the soap was very greasy, and the tallow smelt rather strong, his father's companionship was of great use to him. It was his great desire, as he could leave his children no worldly wealth, to give them while living the better endowment of moral instruction and the awakening of their intellectual energies. (257)

With the stress of the narrative on Franklin's rise, less attention is given to those events that detract from Franklin's elevation. Franklin is "relieved" of the indentures to his brother, and the two agree that Franklin is under no legal obligation. When James continues his cruel treatment, "Benjamin, who was now free, took ship, and went off to New York" (259).

Franklin goes on to Philadelphia, and MacGilchrist concludes his account with Franklin successfully establishing himself as a printer, Franklin's later life being of less consequence to the depiction of the self-made man. For MacGilchrist, Franklin's image of success requires him to be a married man, so the events of Franklin's relationship with Deborah Reed are superficially summarized. Their entire courtship is related in one

sentence: "About this time he married a lady whom he had jilted, and who had married somebody else, but who was now a widow, and willing to forget old grievances and become Mrs. Franklin" (261). MacGilchrist also mentions the publication of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, which he says Franklin annually "stuffed full of prudential maxims with which his name is so identified, expressing them in a homely and telling way, that could not fail to engage the attention of the most vulgar and illiterate" (262).

While MacGilchrist's emphasis remains much the same as earlier writers, we can observe subtle additions which reflect the shifting emphases I argue begin to appear. Of note in this account is the central prominence of Franklin's kite experiment and his application of theoretical knowledge. Though authors continue to stress the entrepreneurial activity in the printing business and Franklin's rise to fortune, MacGilchrist and others who follow focus as much on Franklin's kite flying experience as the latter begins to rival the former in the amount of space devoted to each in the narratives. MacGilchrist tells us that as Franklin retired from business, he used his "leisure for scientific purposes, . . . and commenced some interesting electrical experimentation. He was the first to prove that lightning and electricity are identical" (262). Following the retelling of the experiment, MacGilchrist's final comments reflect Franklin's interest in making knowledge useful to others, in this instance by inventing the lightning rod (an invention which, incidentally, preceded the kite experiment). For MacGilchrist, Franklin's "great idea about science was to make its results practically useful; he at once told the Yankees to put lightning conductors on their houses" (262).

After highlighting the major accomplishments of Franklin's adult life to show the height of his greatness, MacGilchrist concludes with a fitting tribute.

Perhaps no man ever exceeded Dr. Franklin in that solid, practical wisdom which consists in pursuing valuable ends by the most appropriate means. His cool temper and sound judgment secured him from unreasonable expectations; he says things in their true light, and predicted consequences with nearly prophetic spirit. He said of himself, "I have always set a greater value on the character of a *doer of good*, than any other kind of reputation. (264)

Franklin not only achieved success, but he pursued it in a morally appropriate manner, a lesson to those who seek riches at any price.

Through the Civil War and the years following, Franklin becomes the prime example of the self-made man. In Horace Greeley's well-known lecture, "Self-Made Men," first given in 1862, Greeley, himself an influential journalist and politician who had risen above unpromising circumstances, traces Franklin's life from indigent beginnings to his sophisticated life in France, stressing that this great American self-made man owed nothing to inherited wealth, family, or formal education. For Greeley, Franklin served as the model of the ideal American, even surpassing Washington:

Of the men whom the world currently terms *Self-Made*--that is who severally fought their life-battles without the aid of inherited wealth, or family honors, or educational advantages, perhaps our American FRANKLIN stands highest in the civilized world's regard. . . . [He] progress[ed] from the mean tallow-chandler's shop of his Boston father, crammed full of hungry brothers and sisters, to the gilded saloons of Versailles, where he stood the "observed of all observers,"--in fact, more a king than gentle Louis. . . . I think I adequately appreciate the greatness of Washington; yet I must place Franklin above him as the consummate type and flowering of human nature under the skies of colonial America. . . . [W]hen I contemplate the immense variety and versatility of Franklin's services to his country and to mankind . . . , I cannot place Franklin second to any other American. (qtd. in Parton 678-679)

In his lecture Greeley both reinforces the idea of self-improvement and success through self-help, as well as enlarges the image of Franklin.

A reading of Greeley's own autobiography, *Recollections of a Busy Life* (1868), suggests a conscious patterning of his narrative after the *Autobiography*. Greeley mentions in his account that he read Franklin's memoirs as a young boy, and Greeley could not have helped but have been aware of his contemporaries dubbing him the "Franklin" of his day. James Parton, an important biographer of Franklin I will discuss later in this chapter, makes a clear connection between Greeley and the prototypic self-made American of 1855.

[L]ike Franklin, he confines himself chiefly to the improvement of man's condition in material things, but he is better man than Franklin; he is Franklin liberalized and enlightened; he is the Franklin of his generation. Like Franklin, he is more pious than religious, more humane than democrat. (Lunde 86)

A modern biographer of Greeley, Eric Lunde, recounts the parallels between the autobiographies of the two. Both came from New England of Puritan roots, rising from indigent beginnings to positions of influence and fortune without the aid of formal schooling. Both went to the city to become apprentice printers, Greeley to New York and Franklin to Philadelphia, later to become famous writers and editors. While Franklin embraced Deism, Greeley found the more liberal beliefs of Universalism more palatable than the Calvinist dogma of his ancestors. Both men became important public figures involved in community politics and projects, and both autobiographies address themselves to young people, providing a model and instruction for subsequent generations (86-87).

The identification of Franklin with prominent nineteenth-century figures as well as his integration into the success literature of the period center the colonial printer and businessman in the mainstream of self-made men and proponents of success. From the initial focus on Franklin as a prophet of success, writers further developed the self-made theme by expanding the traits Franklin personified and applying them to additional circumstances. During the mid-century, William Alcott had published a manual in the Franklin tradition to promote success. Entitled *Young Man's Guide* (1833), its eight chapters direct youth not only in ways of industry and honesty, but provide practical tips on business management as well as social and moral improvement. Additionally, Alcott imbues his guide with a truly American flavor by adding a patriotic appendix which includes a copy of the U. S. Constitution. The popularity of the work saw Alcott though twenty-one editions by 1858 (Bode 124-126).

The practical, homey wisdom and practical advice found in Franklin's *Autobiography* and *The Way to Wealth* (perpetuating the very one-sided view of the man) also surfaced in new magazines aimed at working men. In 1839 Freeman Hunt, a successful New York businessman, began publishing *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* to chronicle the triumph of merchants. He later collected anecdotes and maxims from his magazines, publishing them in a single volume, *Worth and Wealth: A Collection of*

*Maxims, Morals and Miscellanies, for Merchants and Men of Business* (1856), reminiscent of what Franklin himself did in his treatise, *The Way to Wealth*. Hunt followed this with a two-volume *Lives of American Merchants* (1858) which chronicled the lives of successful men and explained the way they achieved success. Edwin Troxell Freedly, Hunt's Philadelphia rival, wrote prolifically for businessmen and manufacturers. His *Practical Treatise on Business* (1852) and his *Leading Pursuits and Leading Men* (1856) achieved a popularity equal to Freeman's. By 1858 the popularity of "the poor boy who makes it in the world" idea is further seen in Charles C. B. Seymour's *Self-Made Men*, a book providing an account of successful men (Wyllie 18-19). Despite this stress on the characteristics central to the self-made man, little or no mention is made of Franklin in such works. While proverbs or sayings of Franklin, *à la Poor Richard*, are shamelessly plagiarized, Franklin receives credit for few of them, a practice not too surprising, however, since few items are attributed to original authors.

By 1883 as the stress upon material acquisition peaks and the manuals and handbooks on success flourish as never before, T. L. Haines published a streamlined version of Hunt's *Worth and Wealth*. Over a century after its initial publication Haines still found Franklin's advice relevant, and Haines' handbook, also titled *Worth and Wealth*, reflects in its title and intent Franklin's own seminal treatise, *The Way to Wealth*. Haines and other such appropriators of Franklin material, however, fail to reflect the humor and balance found in their patron saint's writing. Where Franklin realized that acquisition of wealth was not enough, Haines and others like him "solemnly and sanctimoniously, preached a gospel of getting rich" with the "zeal of a crusader," making "a religion of material success as a sufficient end in itself" (qtd. in Wright 275). In Haines we see how the Protestant work ethic becomes wholly secularized with rising entrepreneurs replacing the pious prophets of the past. From the start Haines announces, "Business is king. . . . Other influences in society may be equally indispensable, and some may think far more dignified; but business is king" (Wright 275). Haines unquestioningly asserts that

the saint of the nineteenth century is the good merchant; he is wisdom for the foolish, strength for the weak, warning to the wicked and a blessing to all. Build him a shrine in bank and church, in the market and the exchange, or build it not: no saint stands higher than this saint of trade. (Wright 275)

This emphasis upon the acquisition of wealth and the elevation of the businessman makes its mark on the image of Franklin as he becomes the high priest of competitive, entrepreneurial success.

Though the works intended for children at this time do not invariably identify Franklin as a self-made man, those traits integral to the individual of self-achieved success are inevitably present in most depictions of his life. In *Biographies of Great Men* (1868) by M. Jones, the characteristics of perseverance and frugality central to the self-made man are the guiding traits in the short sketch on Franklin. Jones indicates that biographies provide fine examples worthy of children's emulation and that "Benjamin Franklin, the American philosopher and statesman, is a fine example of perseverance under difficulties" (97). While establishing himself in Philadelphia, Jones says that Franklin's position as a journeyman printer "obliged him to live with the utmost *frugality*," and "it was partly for the sake of economy that at this period he often dined on a basin of oat-meal gruel; poor diet enough for any-one, especially for a working man" (98).

In this account, however, the most prominent event from Franklin's life is the kite experiment, as scientific activity appears as the result of his business success.

The science of electricity, then quite a new one, particularly attracted the attention of Franklin, and his numerous experiments at length led him to a very important discovery, --that the electrical fluid, as produced by an electrical machine, is precisely the same thing as lightning. (98)

The experiment with the kite follows, with Jones also making it take on practical application, by reversing the historical sequence, so that "this new fact [Franklin] turned to good account by his invention of what is called lightning conductors" (99). It is this same "electrical fluid," we are told, which "would carry messages around world" (99). Jones concludes that "Franklin's circumstances improved as he grew older. He worked hard, and spent little; and that is one way of acquiring competence" (99). But in this

advancement of his own interests, Franklin "did not forget those of others," growing in maturity to become a good citizen and Christian (99-100).

In a handsome gift book, *the Children's Story-Book of Good and Great Men* (1869), Franklin's scientific work serves as the main focus of the brief sketch. According to the author, he was the first man "who ventured to draw lightning from the thunder-cloud and 'bottle it!'" (187). Explaining what this term means, the narrative continues:

That sounds strange, but it is quite true. He had long thought, in considering an electrical machine, that the *something*, produced by it, which people see in the form of sparks, and feel in the shape of a good blow was the same thing as lightning, which was seen flashing or zig-zagging along the sky, and often knocks down a house, or kills a man. To make sure that he was quite right in this thought, he one day sent up a kite, properly prepared to attract the lightning into a thunder-cloud. (187)

After describing how lightning strikes, the anonymous author explains, "This was not merely an interesting experiment: Franklin made it a useful one; for it taught him how to construct pointed rods, that, planted in the ground, protect our houses from lightning" (188). Franklin's early life is then mentioned as he is shown following the printing trade, "both in America and England, with an industry and economy such as is rarely met with" (189). This diligence accompanied a sincere effort at self-improvement, for "in the intervals of hard work, he diligently improved his mind; so that at last he became not only noted for his scientific attainments, but an important person in state affairs" (189). Even in an 1874 history reader, *A Junior Class History of the United States*, Franklin is noted for the active interest he took in improving himself and the hard work and diligence that brought not only monetary rewards but fame in scientific, diplomatic, and world affairs as well (100, 127, 245).

Some biographers of this time did attempt to broaden the generally accepted view of Franklin, though their work largely served to further the heroic image by creating a multi-talented individual without diminishing his prototypic status as a self-made man or exemplar of worthy virtues. James Parton, in one of the most important biographies of the century, attempts to broaden the figure of Franklin and discuss the many aspects and

achievements of his life. Parton, a journalist and social crusader like the subject of his first biography, Horace Greeley, utilized the wealth of information that had been uncovered on Franklin by the time of the Civil War. Though he clearly shows Franklin in a favorable light and his style proves too florid and flamboyant by modern standards, he never invents details in the manner of earlier biographers like Weems. The influence and importance of Parton's biography, *Life of Benjamin Franklin* (1864), is evident in the many instances where subsequent biographers, particularly those writing for juvenile audiences, quote from Parton's work to substantiate their own claims or simply tell Franklin's story. Parton indicated that he wanted to make "the Doctor's accomplishments more accessible to his countrymen" (I, 8), and the definitive status of and selective borrowing from his biography until the publication of Carl Van Doren's in 1938 testifies to his success in his intent.

Building upon Jared Sparks' *Works of Benjamin Franklin*, Parton shows admirable ability as a scholar in using the most current facts available concerning Franklin, but he cannot refrain from portraying an individual of extraordinary size and abilities, reflecting his own particular biases and those of his time. While his objective as stated in the preface of this two-volume biography is "simply, to render a knowledge of the benign and noble life of Dr. Franklin more accessible to his countrymen" (I,7), Parton's treatment remains heroic and laudatory, much in the vein of many previous biographers. Relating nineteenth-century accomplishments to this early colonial hero and conjecturing how Franklin would react to an odd array of advancements since his death, Parton writes, near the end of the biography,

How pleasant to show the Shade of Franklin's spirit about the modern world! What would he say of the Great Eastern, the Erie Canal, the locomotive, the telegraph, the sewing machine, the Continental Hotel, the Fairmont Water-Works, the improved strawberry, an omnibus, gas-light, the Sanitary Commission, Chicago, Buckle's *History*, Mill's *Political Economy*, Herbert Spencer's *First Principles*, *Adam Bede*, *David Copperfield*, *The Newcomes*, the Philadelphia High School, Henry Ward Beecher's church? Surely he would admit that we have done pretty well in the seventy-five years that have passed since he left us. (II, 585)

The striking aspect of this catalogue is the notable lack of any American literature or intellectual treatise, while all other advancements result from American skill and innovation, reflecting a continuing stereotype about the United States and Great Britain.

Parton goes on to catalogue and describe the tremendous achievements wrought by Franklin (many laying the foundation for the previous advancements described), and in a characteristic way, contrasts the fame and fortune of the older man to his humble and ordinary origin.

Baffling mystery! that in one of the humblest homes of a colonial town, there should have been born sixteen children of only average understanding, and one who grew up to teach and cheer the whole civilized world. Yet the stuff of which Franklin was made was all in that family, . . . but only he was a FRANKLIN in full measure. (641)

While Parton does not specifically discuss Franklin in terms of being a self-made man, the emphasis on the low beginning and the enormous success and popularity later achieved clearly puts the subject of his biography fully within the context of self-help and self-achieved success. Parton is careful, however, to show that Franklin did not amass too much wealth, Parton himself having worked actively against the monopolies of his own day. Therefore, Franklin achieves a modest level of wealth, "enough to prove the American dream, but not so much as to pervert it" (White 229). Franklin retires from business to allow him more time to be of service in political, scientific, and diplomatic circles.

In contrast to Weems, who papered over Franklin's skepticism, Parton found in his subject a kindred spirit. As a religious liberal himself and active leader in organizations like the Free Religious Association and the Free Thinkers Association, Parton promoted a philanthropic benevolence which formed the foundation of his religious belief (White 229). Franklin, resisting the superstitions of his contemporaries like Jonathan Edwards, became "the consummate Christian of his time" (II, 646)

I know not who, of any time, has exhibited more of the spirit of Christ. . . . His whole life was a calm, good-natured protest against narrowness, intolerance, and bigotry, and a moving comment upon the fundamental

doctrine of the Christian religion that "THE ACCEPTABLE WAY OF SERVING GOD IS TO DO GOOD TO HIS OTHER CREATURES." He went about the world doing good. (II, 646)

His good works, however, cannot in the mind of Parton be equated with a profession of faith, and, consequently, he rejects the Weemsian deathbed scene in depicting Franklin's death. Nonetheless, Parton's own conjecture of Franklin's status after death is as marvelously mythic in its own way, reminiscent more of Weems' treatment of Washington's death, in a chapter entitled "Since," an epilogue to Franklin's death.

I would fain continue my story by following this vivid Intelligence into the land of the spirits. Would that I could tell the reader where the great soul of Franklin went, at eleven o'clock in the evening of April 17th, 1790, when it glided so silently from its ruined tenement of clay! Where is it now? What is it now? How is it now employed? . . . One thing only we may certainly know: that, in a universe ordered with such strict economy, wherein not a leaf of the forest nor a drop of the ocean is ever destroyed or wasted, from which no most insignificant atom can ever be separated or permanently diverted from its use, this supreme creation, a great, regenerated human soul, cannot, in any sense of the word, be lost. *Somewhere*, the soul of Franklin is happy, blest, and busy. Death cannot have changed its essential character, nor diminished its power. (624-625)

Weems could have hardly been more florid in his style. For Parton, Franklin's soul remains fundamentally unchanged, with a trinity of virtues--being "happy, blest, and busy"--replacing one of Christian personages. For over a half a century after its publication, Parton's biography served as a important source of information which other writers used to refashion the evolving image of Franklin.

In one of the better popular biographies of the period, *Benjamin Franklin, A Biography* (1865), we see how the prolific author of biographies for youth, George Canning Hill, admittedly acknowledges a debt to Parton. Hill, however, is more intent on depicting a Franklin which can be seen as a product of America, and in so doing creates a figure very close to the self-made man of the latter nineteenth century. Hill explains that the purpose of his books is to provide "examples of true manhood, lofty purpose, and persevering effort . . . for the admiration or emulation of the youth of the present day" (v). Recurring, we see the emphasis on manhood accompanying Civil War entrepreneurialism. In addition to instructing the mind and providing pleasure for the imagination, Hill desires,

more especially, perhaps, to familiarize the youth of [his] day with those striking and manly characters, that have long ago made their mark, deep and lasting, on the history and fortunes of the AMERICAN CONTINENT. (v-vi)

Not only is the ideology of competitive manhood inherent in the cult of success a part of Hill's subtext (one's sense of self and "manliness" defined largely by work and material success), but the qualities of industry and shrewdness are implicitly viewed as characteristically American as well. Hill begins his biography of Franklin with a description that could easily have been used to describe a typical self-made man of his own day.

It is uncommon for the steps of so practical a person as Dr. Franklin to be turned into such romantic paths. He could have dreamed of nothing more than a life of hard and steady labor. . . . He was a genuine product of American soil. His mother-wit served him better than learning, and his ready knowledge of human nature was an invaluable resource. He was shrewd and sagacious; prudent, yet bold; frugal, yet generous; a student of philosophy, but a man of the world. (7)

Though Hill never explicitly discusses Franklin as a self-made man, those traits central to the type are the dominant characteristics shown to be responsible for Franklin's success.

In a narration quite free from the didacticism of earlier biographies, Hill follows the early part of the *Autobiography* very closely. Franklin's early lack of privilege and opportunity is shown, with Franklin battling his indigent circumstances through a process of self-education and hard work. When opportunities become too limiting in Boston, Franklin begins looking to expand his horizons.

Benjamin began to feel the weight of the yoke of his apprenticeship, and to wish it lifted from his neck altogether. At any rate, the tyrannical treatment from which he then suffered, excited his hatred of tyranny from that time forward through his whole career. (25-26)

Those details not germane to the rise to success are handily summarized or eliminated.

Thus, the account of Collins' part in aiding young Benjamin in his flight from Boston has him saying to the captain that Franklin

was a young man of his acquaintance who had got into trouble with a girl of bad reputation, and who her parents insisted should marry her; in

consequence of which, he could neither make his appearance in public, nor come down to his vessel except privately. (28-29)

Leaving Boston, "Benjamin Franklin now had his own way to make. He chanced to be one of the few runaway lads who 'came to something' afterwards" (29). Clearly, Franklin fits the type of the poor boy going to the city to make his fortune, and even though he was a runaway, through his shrewdness and diligence he established himself successfully in Philadelphia.

Hill suggests the growing importance of entrepreneurial competition through a lengthy discussion of Franklin and his printing rivals in Philadelphia. In comparison to Ben, the printers from whom he initially seeks employment are either "illiterate" or "knavish," Hill's depiction of Bradford and Keimer respectively. Being hired by Keimer, Franklin "lived, working industriously and making himself contented" (39). Franklin's adeptness is shown on numerous occasions. For instance, his "ingenuity was a real source of profit to the establishment; for when the office needed types and engravings of a certain kind, and even ink, Franklin went to work and *manufactured* them" (74). This diligent work is seen ultimately as the key to all success, as Franklin avoids all forms of idle entertainment.

All the recreation he allowed himself was reading. He wasted no time in games, frolics, or taverns; and he continued working at his trade with all the energy he had at command. . . . He continued just as frugal as ever, keeping constantly in mind that proverb of Solomon which his father had often repeated to him while a boy, "Seest thou a man diligent in his calling? He shall stand before Kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

Little thought he, while revolving this same proverb in his mind, that it would be by reason of his *diligence*, as well as of his other virtues, that he would in truth, "stand before Kings!" But from the time when he began to see that his prosperity was the result of his diligence, he had faith to believe that industry was at the bottom of all success in life. (107)

This same diligence to one's work and calling, the hallmark of the nineteenth-century's self-made man, becomes the key to Franklin's ability to start his own printing business and succeed against his rivals.

Like other biographers of the latter half of the century, Hill discusses Franklin's scientific greatness. In relating the kite episode, Hill remarks that

the experiment of drawing down the lightnings from the heavens, which was to demonstrate that they and electricity were one and the same substance, it was ordained that Franklin should make, with the simple means which were at his command. . . . The experiment was a success. The printer-philosopher . . . made a discovery from which consequences of the most important character were to be secured to the human family" (193, 195).

While Hill shows Franklin's importance as a scientific thinker as indisputable, he includes an interesting array of the psuedo-scientific, or "various little electrical amusements" (196) Franklin performed. Hill explains such tricks as the "magic pistol" and the "dancing little dogs," the former involving an instrument filled with inflammable gas and stopped with a cork which would crack and shoot forth like a pistol shot when the container was electrically charged, and the latter consisting of little dogs "made of elder pith, with straw feet and tails" which would jump about in an enclosed jar when a sufficient electrical charge was generated beneath them. Though Franklin's genuine talent in scientific matters was generally acknowledged during the late nineteenth century, the reciting of such tricks performed by the man "who tamed lightning" added to the general mystique and awe surrounding his accomplishments. In his own day Franklin was clearly conscious of how his pseudo-scientific experiments and games affected his image. Such a legend surrounded his trickeries and amusements that, during the Revolutionary War, Horace Walpole contemptuously admitted that many of the British ministers believed "that Dr. Franklin [had] invented a machine of the size of a toothpick case and materials that would reduce St. Paul's to a handful of ashes" (qtd. in Van Doren 660).

Of diminishing importance in Hill's biography is the concern with Franklin's unorthodox religious views. Consequently, he gives more attention to Franklin's skeptical views. Hill stresses that good, upright individuals are not bound by sect but have inherent morals and virtues that guide their actions. Much of Franklin's moral wisdom Hill sees contained in the almanacs of Poor Richard, which become a sort of "library of wisdom, --a compendium of common sense" (109, 114). Hill quotes numerous maxims of Poor Richard and reprints *The Way to Wealth*, here called "Father Abraham's Speech," in its

entirety. According to Hill, in what would appear to be an attempt to pacify religiously devout readers, Franklin, just before his death, is to have "expressed his gratitude for the many blessings he had received at the hands of Heaven, that he had been raised from such a low and small beginning to his high rank and consideration among men" (325). In the end returning the fundamental traits responsible for his success in life, Hill places Franklin in the tradition of the nineteenth-century self-made man, one whose success allowed him to devote himself to scientific and diplomatic concerns which in turn benefited countless others.

During the latter part of the nineteenth century, the continued printing of the *Autobiography*, with its fundamental focus on Franklin's rise from obscurity to fortune, additionally reinforced his status as a self-made man. The *Autobiography* remained popular reading in spite of the many biographies and short pieces appearing on Franklin. New editions of the *Autobiography* continued to be published during the years following the Civil War, with one of the most important editions appearing in 1868, edited by John Bigelow. Bigelow, serving as America's minister to France, purchased the original Franklin holograph, and thereby discovered numerous errors in the then existing editions. Using the 1840 Sparks edition to revise the *Autobiography*, Bigelow corrected over twelve hundred errors and for the first time in English made available Part Four, which Franklin had completed just prior to his death. The resulting effort produced the most correct and complete edition to have then been published to date. Through the years following the Civil War, the *Autobiography* served as one of the primary texts to demonstrate the possibilities available to the self-made man.

Though the image of the self-made man included a sphere of individuals and situations far different from Franklin's life and rise as depicted in the *Autobiography*, he remained an important exemplar central to the promotion of the cult of success. As biographies and accounts of famous men circulated, many acknowledged an indebtedness to Franklin and his life's story. The degree of influence Franklin had on such individuals

is difficult to determine, but the mere mention and recognition of Franklin's example demonstrates the increasingly mythic proportions he was offering. Thomas Mellon, a successful self-made banker, tells how reading the *Autobiography* influenced him as a young boy of fourteen. Living on the family farm outside Pittsburgh, Mellon obtained an old copy of the *Autobiography* from a neighbor which, upon reading, inspired him with new ambition. Mellon recounts the following:

I had not before imagined any other course of life superior to farming, but the reading of Franklin's life led me to question this view. For so poor and friendless a boy to be able to become a merchant or a professional man had before seemed an impossibility; but here was Franklin, poorer than myself, who by industry, thrift and frugality had become learned and wise, and elevated to wealth and fame. The maxims of "Poor Richard" exactly suited my sentiments. . . . I regarded the reading of Franklin's *Autobiography* the turning point in my life. (qtd. in Wyllie 15)

In a manner typifying the path the self-made man of the 1870s might take, Mellon left the farm to find work in Pittsburgh, where he became a lawyer and money lender, eventually founding his own bank. As a banker he erected a statue of Franklin in front of his office building, signifying Franklin's inspiration to him. In his later years Mellon purchased a thousand copies of the *Autobiography* to distribute to young men seeking advice and money (Wyllie 15-16). Not every reader of the *Autobiography* could acknowledge such a powerful influence, but Mellon's account suggests that Franklin's writings (the *Autobiography* and *The Way to Wealth*) were readily available to readers, and that Franklin had begun to achieve an influential mythic status.

A striking reworking of the Franklin myth in context of a nineteenth-century self-made farmer and jack-of-all-trades was the 1862 publication of the autobiography of Asa G. Sheldon. Echoing many of the sentiments Franklin expresses in the beginning of his *Autobiography*, Sheldon states in a short preface his purpose in writing.

To gratify the wishes of numerous friends, to indulge in living the past over again, to give what I may of encouragement to the temperate and diligent, to cheer the disheartened, amid the common trials of life, to give my voice of warning to the selfish and vicious, and to add a mite of experimental knowledge to this age of improvement, this unpretending autobiography is

sent forth, hope it may meet with the same kindly reception from friends and the community at large. . . . (xxi)

Quoting the revered "Dr. Franklin" numerous times and modeling his own story after the *Autobiography*, Sheldon tells of his own indigent beginnings. Equally proud of his ancestry as Franklin, he opens the account with a short genealogy. Early on, Sheldon learns the value of saving. He purchases a small tin box, which serves as a bank to keep his savings. After saving 108 copper pennies, he goes to a local pedlar to purchase a primer and a "pewter porringer out of which to eat bread and milk in the summer and bean porridge in the winter season" (5). With an ironic twist from Franklin's tale of paying too much for a whistle, the honest pedlar, seeing he has taken Asa's last cent, "gave me a tin whistle. Like Dr. Franklin, when a child, 'I went home whistling'" (5). Here, the wise boy does not squander his money foolishly but is rewarded for his frugality and thoughtful purchase.

Many of the events of Sheldon's early life parallel Franklin's own, but with striking differences. As a youth, Asa's father binds him to a neighboring farmer, necessitating his leaving home to make it on his own. Asa proves an industrious laborer, and continually perseveres in unfavorable circumstances. When the indentured situation grows intolerable, Sheldon breaks the contract and returns home to find other work, though with none of the stealth involved in Franklin's situation. He proceeds to hire out for other work, and ingeniously devises other methods of securing income, such as cutting wood and bundling faggots for use in cooking ovens. In numerous passages, Asa, keenly aware of a young audience, pause to encourage "boys" to emulate his example of industry, frugality, and temperance, traits he sees as integral to his success. Various anecdotes demonstrate the benefit or ill effect of heeding or ignoring his counsel, similar to the manner Franklin employs.

Sheldon also becomes an entrepreneur in his own manner, buying and selling property as well as devising a system whereby he travels to areas that have a surplus of certain commodities, whether it be pigs or flour or cider, returning to his own locale where

such items are scarce or difficult to obtain and selling them for a profit. He demonstrates his Yankee ingenuity on a number of occasions, whether in rigging a wagon in such a way to carry an unprecedented load or skillfully working at the laying of a stone buttress for a railroad bridge. The ironic reversal of the narrative comes, however, when Sheldon is forced into bankruptcy by unscrupulous men of the railroad who refuse to pay Asa for the work and expense he incurred while laying a section of rail for them. Finally reaching an arbitrated settlement with the railroad, Sheldon "made the best settlement with creditors circumstances would permit," and, after having fallen from his secure status of as an independent, self-made man, "began life again with only \$75" (131).

Clearly demonstrating the risk involved in any entrepreneurial endeavor as well as the changing dynamics of the economic situation with the advent of larger corporations, Sheldon, nonetheless, imbues his work with the moral maxims so characteristic of Poor Richard.

I sometimes hear young men say that they can get nothing to do. If you cannot get the price you want, you had better work for smaller wages than cultivate idleness. If those who have work to do will not employ you, be assured that there is a "leak in the bucket," and you must search out the leak and stop it up, and thus make your services acceptable. (111)

More directly advising young workers, Sheldon continues to impart his self-acquired wisdom.

It is my wish that young men would hereby be encouraged to be faithful to their employers. When that fact is fully established, it is a firm stepping-stone to prosperity. Faithfulness to trust is pecuniary as well as morally the best policy. (111)

So characteristic of Franklin's own maxim-making, Sheldon begins to bridge the gap between the artisan lifestyle in which Franklin found his success and the capitalistic marketplace of larger corporations characteristic of the late nineteenth century. Sheldon, himself a victim of unscrupulous capitalists, provides counsel which Horatio Alger imbues in his fictional narratives about young men struggling for a modicum of wealth and respectability. Such pleas to avoid idleness and "hustle" for work, along with the plea to

be faithful and honest to one's employer could have as easily come out of Alger's *Ragged Dick* or *Struggling Upward*. In a subsequent chapter we will see even more pointedly how latter nineteenth-century values and economics affect the mythic "rags-to-riches" theme in general and the image of Franklin in particular.

By the end of the decade following the Civil War, the image of the self-made man had itself reached mythic proportions. This in part resulted from the wide spectrum of individuals serving as exemplars of the self-made man and the unlimited opportunities which America was perceived as having, opportunities which were supposed to be available to all who worked hard, saved, and persevered. Of the many examples of success held up for others to emulate, none were more prevalent nor more important than Franklin, with one critic claiming that Benjamin Franklin was the subject of more biographies during the later nineteenth century than any other individual who had lived (Hart 197). The promotion of and regard given to Franklin and the image of the self-made man suggests the centrality of the values each had come to represent. With the rise of fiction and of fictional narratives on Franklin also occurring during the Civil War and post-Civil War period, discussed at length in the following two chapters, we will see even more clearly how Franklin achieves a symbolic status as a self-made man, with an almost religious-like devotion given to the fundamental virtues of industry, frugality, and perseverance he represents.

#### Notes

1. The awarding of Franklin's medals came at the bequest of Franklin through a provision of his will. Carl Van Doren describes the institution and history of the Franklin medal in his biography, *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1941):

To the directors of "the free schools in my native town of Boston" [Franklin] left [in his will] a hundred pounds, of which the interest was to be annually "laid out in silver medals and given as honorary rewards." The Franklin medals were awarded first in January 1793, and continuously after that. Always given only to boys, they have since 1867 been given only to boys in the Boston Latin School and other high schools. In 1922

the number of medals was about thirty a year, and the total from 1793 had been about four thousand. (762)

2. In a Senate debate regarding a protective tariff, Henry Clay is credited with first using the term "self-made men" in 1832 while defending the tariff against those who felt it would create a hereditary aristocracy of industrial elite. In the spirit characteristic of American individualism and self-reliance, Clay asserts, "In Kentucky, almost every manufactory known to me, is in the hands of enterprising and self-made men, who have acquired whatever wealth they possess by patient and diligent labor" (*The Life and Speeches of the Hon. Henry Clay*, vol. 2, ed. Daniel Mallory [New York: Van Armings and Bixby, 1844] p. 31). The idea of becoming a "self-made" man became an obsession during the years following the Civil War, especially during the period of entrepreneurial enthusiasm Mark Twain termed "the Gilded Age." For an extended discussion of the American self-made man, see Irvine G. Wyllie's *The Self-Made Man in America: The Myth of Rags to Riches* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers UP, 1954). See also Rush Welter's *The Mind of America 1820-1860* (New York and London: Columbia UP, 1975), pp. 129-162.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE RISE AND INFLUENCE OF FICTIONAL NARRATIVES

Even more important than the short sketches and biographies to the ever increasing mythic image of Franklin was the infusion of fiction into accounts of Franklin's life and the fully fictionalized narratives that followed. One of the most influential writers of the success cult who mastered the biographical form was William Makepeace Thayer. For Thayer biography was not limited to a mere chronological recitation of facts and dates but could be brought to life by the drama of a person's experiences, providing an exceptional educational tool. Expressing a sentiment very close to eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century didactic writers, Thayer maintains that in biographies "virtues are taught both by precept and example, and the vices are held up in all their deformity to warn and save. Religion, too, receives its just tribute, and wears the crown of glory" (qtd. in Huber 52). One of Thayer's most successful group of biographies was the "Log Cabin to White House Series." In these biographies Thayer retells the lives of U. S. Presidents who rose from simple backgrounds to occupy the White House. He wrote of Washington (who he says came from a simple family farm not a plantation), Lincoln, Grant, and Garfield. Significantly, he includes his biography of Franklin in this series, suggesting Franklin's rank among the Presidents of the United States in popularity and significance, an increasing emphasis during this period.

Thayer prefaces the 1861 edition of his biography, *The Printer Boy, or How Benjamin Franklin Made His Mark. An Example for Youth*, with a brief introduction replete with Poor Richard's maxims.

This book is designed to illustrate the familiar maxim, that "The Boy is the Father to the Man." The early life of Franklin is sketched from his

childhood to the time he was established in business, thus showing what he was in boyhood and youth; and the achievements of his manhood are summed up in a closing chapter, to substantiate the truth of the above proverb. (iii)

Thayer sets out consciously to demonstrate Franklin's rise to fortune from obscure beginnings, an approach we have seen with previous authors but which achieved greater vogue with the advent of the self-made man. Thayer infuses fictional elements into his biographies, and he explains his approach in the preface to the *Printer Boy*:

The author believes that the lives of distinguished men may be incorporated into a story, uniting narrative and dialogue so as to be more attractive to the young. . . . Why may not truth appear in such a dress as successfully as fiction? Why may not *actual* lives be presented in this manner as vividly as imaginary ones? The young mind will seize upon a truth or fact that is conveyed in a story, when it will remain wholly indifferent to it as it appears in a simple statement. (iii-iv)

Thayer, reflecting a sentiment Franklin's himself expressed when commenting on his own enjoyment of Bunyan and Defoe, feels that if eminent individuals "speak and act" for themselves in fiction, they generate greater interest and influence in young minds than would occur by merely reading a summary of facts. Assuring us that he has credibly depicted Franklin, Thayer says, "the imagination has done no more than weave the facts of his boyhood and youth into a 'tale of real life!'"(iv). In his work, Thayer feels he makes Franklin and his associates *do* what others have said he did, painting the setting and action more vividly than he could do in the standard telling.

In Thayer's biography, we begin to see the formulated characteristics of the self-made man have a greater controlling influence on Franklin's depiction than in previous accounts. Thayer tells us that

a conspicuous place is given in the work to the maxims of Franklin, for the purpose of conveying important lessons in regard to the formation of character, and thus stimulating the young in the path of well-doing. Whole volumes of meaning are condensed into many of his wise and pithy sayings. (iv)

As before, we see no distinction made between Franklin and Poor Richard; Thayer attributes the moral maxims of perseverance and diligence to Franklin as evidence of his sterling character and as the reason for his dramatic rise in the world. Thayer builds a

frame for Franklin's success on *The Way to Wealth*, as well as from his own rewriting of Franklin's success formula in self-help guides he authored, such works as *Tact, Push, and Principle*, *A Guide to Young Men*, and *Aim High: Hints and Helps for Young Men*, and in a series of school readers, *Turning Points in Successful Careers*, *The Ethics of Success*, and *Men Who Win*. While Thayer's biography of Franklin follows closely the events chronicled in the *Autobiography*, the inclusion of invented dialogue, often in the form of characters quoting various maxims, and the underlying emphasis on the success ideology brings the work closer to fiction.

Thayer begins his biography by retelling the story of a young Franklin paying too much for a whistle. Further dramatizing the cliché, "not worth the whistle," which Franklin so aptly demonstrated in his short anecdote, Thayer uses this as the controlling image of his biography. Franklin, who had been given some spare change to spend on himself, grew enamored with a whistle and gladly gave all his money to a shopkeeper to obtain it. Only later, when he learns that he has paid much more than it was worth, does he feel regret. From this experience put in story form, written and published in his later years, Franklin learns that the idea of "paying too much for a whistle" can apply to any endeavor not worth the time, effort, or resources required. Thayer observes that while the incident caused Franklin temporary heartache, it provided a valuable lesson. For

on the whole, it was really a benefit that Benjamin paid too much for his whistle. For he learned a lesson thereby which he never forgot. It destroyed his happiness on that holiday, but it saved him from much unhappiness in years to come. (6)

Thayer then draws an appropriate lesson and application for the reader.

Thus Benjamin made good use of one of the foolish acts of boyhood, which tells well for both his head and heart. Many boys are far less wise, and do the same foolish thing over and over again. They never learn wisdom from the wisdom from the past. Poor, simple, pitiable class of boys!

Let the reader prove himself another Benjamin Franklin in this respect. Remember that there is more than one way to pay too dear for a whistle, and he is wisest who tries to discover them all. (7)

Thayer shapes the rest of the biography around this story of the whistle, while continually asking if Franklin has paid "too much for a whistle," and if readers likewise guilty of such actions are "paying too much" as well. We note here a contrast with the wharf story which has had so much earlier stress, with a shift in emphasis from "honesty is the best policy" to a much more mercantile theme--getting the most for your money is the best policy.

Like Weems, Thayer digresses on various topics he feels important to youth, especially those which warrant some cautionary admonition. Applying the theme of "paying too dear for a whistle" to situations of his day, Thayer provides lengthy counsel to his young readers.

When a boy equivocates, or deceives, to conceal some act of disobedience from his parents or teachers, and thereby lays the foundations for habitual untruthfulness, he pays too dear for the whistle; and he will learn the truth of it when he becomes older, and cannot command the confidence of his friends and neighbors, but is branded by them as an unreliable, dishonest man.

In like manner, the boy who thinks it is manly to smoke, and fill the wine-cup, will find that he has a very expensive whistle, when he becomes "hail fellow well met" among a miserable class of young men, and is despised and discarded by the virtuous and good.

So, in general, the young person who is fascinated by worldly pleasures, and supposes that wealth and honor are real apples of gold to the possessor, thinking less of goodness and a life of piety than he does of mere show and worldliness, will find that he has been playing with a costly whistle, when age and his last sickness comes, and death confronts him with its stern realities. (8)

This manner of admonition often interrupts the narrative. Though not as overtly religious as Weems, Thayer is not one whit less didactic.

In Thayer's biography the paternal uncle, Uncle Benjamin, also plays a more significant role than in earlier biographies. As Franklin discusses the merits of education with his father,

"Uncle Benjamin," as he was called in the family, a brother of our little hero's father, sat listening to the conversation, and at this point remarked, "Yes, Benjamin, [going to school] is the best thing you can do. I am sure you can make very rapid progress at school; and there ought to be one preacher in the family, I think." (6-7)

The last suggestion, as Franklin himself tells us, refers to the early hope his father and uncle had for him, but in Thayer's version Uncle Benjamin promises to teach Franklin shorthand and to give his godson his own religious pamphlets and collected sermons. Though Uncle Benjamin plays a minor role, his initial depiction and characterization reflect the trend that grows increasingly dominant in subsequent biographies: full fictionalizing of characters in the narrative.

Throughout the biography Thayer tells most of the significant events of Franklin's early years through stilted dialogue. For instance, Franklin's leaving school to work in his father's shop is related in a moralistic discussion between the two.

"I had rather not go into the shop," said Benjamin. "I think I shall not like to make candles, and I really wish you would engage in some other business."

"And starve, too," said his father. "In such times as these we must be willing to do what will insure us a livelihood. I know of no other business that would give me a living at present, certainly none that I am qualified to pursue."

"Well, I should rather make soap and candles than starve," said Benjamin; "but nothing else could make me willing to follow the business." (14)

Feeling that Benjamin does not fully understand the importance of work, Josiah continues.

"One other thing ought to make you willing to do such work," added his father. "You had better do this than nothing, for idleness is the parent of vice. Boys like you should be industrious, even if they do not earn their bread. It is better for them to work for nothing than not to work at all. . . . If they are idle when they are young, they will be so when they become men, and idleness will finally be their ruin. (14)

Of course, Franklin's father observes this philosophy all his life and makes certain there are no "drones" around his house. Under such positive influence Franklin is reared, "and he grew up to be in as much love with industry as his father was" (14). Such an incident provides Thayer with another opportunity to quote pages of Poor Richard maxims in the hope of inculcating young readers with the same values.

The role of Ben's father depicted in this last incident coupled with the moral reasoning Josiah uses when convincing his son of the error of stealing stones to construct a wharf illustrates a fundamental shift occurring in the conception and role of parenting,

particularly a father's. In language striking to the mid-nineteenth century, let alone Franklin's day, Ben undermines the very means by which his father, or any man of the period, would define himself: "I really wish you would engage in some other business" (14). As Franklin himself observed, the crucial question for a man is not "*What is he?*" but "*What can he do?*" (*Writings* 977). Reflecting what Jay Fliegelman calls the Lockean paradigm of the eighteenth century, Josiah typifies the supportive parent who patiently teaches a child by word and deed (2). Influenced by Locke's sensationalist epistemology which views a young mind as a *tabula rasa*, Thayer sees Josiah's duty as one of encouraging and reasoning with his son. Rather than asserting his paternal authority to silence his son in the questioning of his vocation or using corporal punishment to deter Benjamin from stealing, Josiah, in the tradition of Weems, patiently and reasonably works to develop his son's rational faculties, thereby encouraging the autonomy needed to become a functioning adult. Underlying this view of paternity, James Henretta sees

a new conception of parental duty and authority. Fathers had begun to consider their role not as that of patriarchs grandly presiding over an ancestral estate and minutely controlling the lives of their sons and heirs, but rather as that of benefactors responsible for the future well-being and prosperity of their offspring. (30)

Though more patriarchal controls linger than Henretta may suggest, the trend is certainly to a different type of parental role.

The influence of Rousseau upon Thayer is also evident. Advancing Locke's conception of the child through his novelistic pedagogical work *Émile* (1762), Rousseau an advocate of a young person's inherent goodness, believed that "a child is best educated by giving him the free expression of his 'natural inclinations' and then . . . manipulating the consequences of that freedom" (Fliegelman 30), precisely the approach employed here. Thayer depicts Josiah as such a benefactor in a trend--building upon the foundation of the preceptor figure developed by Thomas Day and evident in the Franklin narrative as early as Weems--which becomes even more important to the depiction of Franklin by later

biographer Henry Mayhew and central to the fiction of the period's most noted juvenile author, Horatio Alger.

In Thayer's biography, further examples from Franklin's life lead to other tangential discussions. While working for his father, Franklin remains dutifully obedient, a trait Thayer implores readers to develop. Of course, Franklin's parents deserved such honorable treatment, but the principle of obedience, regardless of one's domestic situation and the growing stress on independence, remains consistent for a child as well. Thayer digresses here about a man who had eight sons, all of whom honored and obeyed him. The extent of their filial respect and diligence is suggested by their each being a recipient of a Franklin school medal.

When the statue of Franklin was inaugurated, in 1856, a barouche appeared in the procession that carried eight brothers, all of whom received Franklin medals at the Mayhew School in their boyhood, sons of the late Mr. John Hall. They were all known to fame for their worth of character and wide influence. (23)

Franklin not only serves as an example of the virtues Thayer promotes, but those who have followed Franklin's example and adopted his outlook and values (presumably those recipients of the Franklin medal in this instance) provide further testimony to the benefits of an upright life.

Thayer continues to follow the basic narrative line of the *Autobiography* by summarizing the main events of Franklin's life in uneven dialogue, extrapolating morals from various anecdotes. For instance, in the incident of the stone wharf building referred to earlier, Franklin learns from that "honesty is the best policy." After Franklin sees that he is "fairly caught" in his mischief, he confesses, and Josiah reasons with his son.

You have been guilty of an act that is quite flagrant, although it may have been done thoughtlessly. You should have known better, after having received so much good instruction as you have had at home. (50)

This, according to Thayer, was "the second time he *paid too dear for his whistle*" (50).

The biography continues, and in most all instances Thayer shows Benjamin to be a model child worthy of emulation. For instance, Franklin's temperate behavior (or at least

the lack of imbibing assumed by the author) Thayer shows as unique to the eighteenth century: "The temperate habits which Benjamin formed in his youth were the more remarkable, because there were no temperance societies at that time, and it was generally supposed to be necessary to use intoxicating drinks" (60). We see Franklin work hard at any task given him and quickly become a proficient printer while working for his brother James. In most every regard, Franklin emerges as the ideal child.

Difficulties do arise, however, between Franklin and his brother James. In Thayer's rendering of the conflict which ensues, James receives most of the blame. Though Thayer, recalling Franklin's own words, admits that "it was not fair" of him to take advantage of his brother by breaking his indentures and leaving Boston, we see the apprentice printer's actions as totally understandable and justifiable. Collins, who has previously been introduced as an expert debater, comes to Franklin's aid when he decides to leave Boston. He tells Franklin that he knows the captain of a sloop whose ship lies anchored in the harbor, ready to sail for New York. Collins indicates that he can make a bargain with the ship's captain for his friend's passage. But Ben expresses some concern.

"But he will want to know who I am, and will refuse to take me when he finds I am a runaway."

"I can manage that, if you will leave it to me," answered John [Collins]. "I will pledge you that he will never know your name is Franklin."

"I agree, then, to commit myself to your care. See that you manage the affair well, for to New York I must go." (66)

Collins then arranges with the captain to receive Franklin clandestinely.

In this instance Thayer places on Collins all responsibility for the deception used to secure Franklin's passage. As Collins (referred to in the text by his given name John) tries to convince the captain to take his friend to New York, he realizes a mounting suspicion in the seasoned sailor and "resolved to fabricate a story, in other words, to tell a base lie" (143).

"Well," said John, "if I must tell you the whole story, the case is this. He is a young fellow who has been flirting with a girl, who wants to marry him, and now her parents are determined that he shall marry her, and he is

determined that he will not, and he proposes to remove secretly to New York. He could have come to see you himself, but it is not safe for him to appear out so publicly, and therefore he sent me to do the business. (143)

As the rigid morality of the Victorian era grows more pronounced in America, the invented story of the "naughty girl" grows milder until in most late century accounts biographers eliminate it altogether. Thayer's intent in retelling the story lies more in demonstrating the character of Collins and showing how his lying foreshadows his ultimate downfall.

A youth who can fabricate a falsehood so unblushingly as John did this is a candidate for ruin. The reader will not be surprised to learn, before the whole story is told, that he became a miserable, wicked man. This single lie proved that he was destitute of moral principle, and would do almost anything to carry his project. (143)

According to Thayer, for some unaccountable reason the captain of the sloop believed Collins, and Benjamin found a way to leave Boston.

Paradoxically, Thayer sees the telling of one lie as far worse than what we would normally think of as being the more serious offense committed by Franklin: breaking his indentures or running away. Thayer does concede that Ben behaved very "unwisely" and "wickedly" in whole matter of leaving Boston, even though his brother abused him.

Although his brother was severely harsh in his treatment of him, it was not sufficient reason for his running away from home, and he was thoroughly convinced of this at an early day. Such an act is one of the most flagrant sins that a youth can commit, although circumstances may render it less guilty in some cases than in others. In the case of Benjamin, the unkind treatment which he received at the hand of his brother instigated his sin, though it by no means excused it. (145)

Thayer comments that after Franklin's flight from Boston, he seems on the "highway to ruin," for one can hardly think of an instance where a runaway "escapes the vortex of degradation" (146). Franklin's redemption comes in part by the difficulty of the situation he encounters after leaving home and family. Spending days and nights upon the sea without a bed, subject to poor weather, Franklin found it "hard fare," especially for one "who had been accustomed to a comfortable bed and regular sleep" (151). Franklin, having left a comfortable home and the security of friends and family for his present position in the "wet and perilous berth," began to "feel that he had *paid too dear for his*

*whistle*" (151). Thayer reminds us that "runaways usually feel thus sooner or later, since few of them ever realize their anticipations" (151).

Despite the inclusion of invented dialogue and didactic lessons in the story, the tenor of Thayer's narrative remains similar to the more standard biographies of the Civil War and post-Civil War era. Thayer, like his predecessors, continues to place emphasis on Franklin's hard work and diligence. While learning the printing trade, Franklin had

the advantage of having attended to his business closely, so as to learn thoroughly the work he was to do. Some boys perform their work in just a passable way, not caring particularly whether it is well done, if they can only "pass muster." But not so with Benjamin. (79)

This diligence allows Franklin to successfully find employment in Philadelphia in establishing an honorable reputation for himself. By the time he returns to Boston seven months later to solicit his father's assistance, we see the results of his hard work. Just before leaving Boston a second time to return to Philadelphia, his father remarks,

I am rejoiced that you have conducted yourself so well. . . . Your appearance, too, shows that you have been industrious and economical, all of which pleases me very much. . . . By industry, economy, and perseverance you will be able to command the means of establishing business then. (185-186)

Using Collins to serve as a foil to Franklin's rise, Thayer demonstrates the sad result of neglecting the controlling virtues Ben lives by. In just seven months from the time of his lie to the captain of the sloop, Collins has become idle, intemperate, and generally wicked, all beginning with his dishonesty (ironically, in his friend's behalf). When Ben meets Collins in New York on his way back to Philadelphia, he finds his boyhood friend intoxicated.

"Can it be," [Franklin] exclaimed to Collins, "that you are intemperate?"  
 "I intemperate!" retorted Collins, disposed to resent the accusation.  
 "Do you call me drunk?" . . .  
 "Once you were as temperate and industrious as any young man in Boston, and far more respected than most of them. How did it happen that you formed this evil habit?" (190)

Surprisingly, Thayer attributes Collins' downfall here to a disavowal of religion, most likely in an attempt to give reason for the lack of moral character that first surfaced in his

lying, which has progressed to more serious sins. The unexpected twist comes when Thayer suggests Franklin's earlier argumentative debates with Collins caused the skepticism of the latter: "Until that time he was industrious, temperate, and honest. But having lost his respect for religion, he was left without restraint, and went rapidly to ruin" (194-195). Thayer, however, feels no need to find an excuse for Ben's negative influence; he merely begins a new chapter so that the runaway printer comes away unblemished. This strategy of showing another's weaknesses is similar to one used in the *Autobiography* in that Franklin's rise is enhanced by the failure of others, but not, as here, in a reciprocal arrangement where someone's decline directly correlates to Franklin's success.

Throughout the biography Franklin maintains his drive to spend little and work hard. These habits keep him from detestable habits and ensure his eventual success. Even after marriage, Thayer says, he "adhered to the same principle of economy. Instead of doing as many young men do at this era of life, living beyond their income, he continued frugal" (238). His adherence to these principles allows him to succeed in Philadelphia when others around him fail. Thayer reminds us that

here, in early life, our hero laid the foundation of his fortune; and the reader need not be at a loss to discover the secret of his success. He made himself by the sterling elements of character which he cultivated. (243)

As proof of Franklin's sterling character and subsequent greatness, Thayer catalogues and then elaborates on the many achievements and honors of Franklin's later years.

As the biography ends, the Thayer returns to his controlling theme.

We have thus far followed the subject of this volume from the time he paid *too dear for his whistle*, to the period when he was well established in business. We have seen what his character was as a PRINTER BOY, and hence his promise of success. (254)

Though Thayer portrays Franklin as less than perfect, Ben certainly possesses the qualities indispensable for success, aptly demonstrating the proof of the adage that "the boy is the father of the man." Suggesting that it would take volumes to enumerate all of Franklin's achievements, Thayer closes by saying "this brief reference to the more prominent of these

[accomplishments] is sufficient to afford the reader a view of the REMARKABLE MAN, and to illustrate the force of energy, industry, integrity, and perseverance, in human destiny" (259).

While the thrust of Thayer's biography comes very much within the frame of the cult of success, remnants of the Weemsian tradition linger as the religious, Christianized Franklin remains a dominant part of the conclusion. Though Thayer does not repeat the Weems deathbed anecdote, he tells us that "in his riper years, Franklin sincerely regretted the doubts of his youth and early manhood respecting religion" (260). His generosity to religious workers such as Whitefield, his numerous benevolent acts, and his open acknowledgment and thanks to Providence are all cited as evidence of his later faith. "He carried," says the author, "his reverence for God and his regard for Christianity into the high places of authority," and "his confidence in the Christian religion, and his regard for purity of conduct, did not diminish as he drew near the grave" (262, 264). Thus, in the end, Thayer reaffirms the Christianity of his prototypic self-made man.

In an 1860 biography by English author and social crusader, Henry Mayhew, we see the full development of many previous trends as well as significant new aspects emerging within the Franklin image. As Franklin's life becomes fully fictionalized, the presence of Poor Richard and the success ideology become inseparable from the refashioned figure of the man. Mayhew's inventiveness comes in how he imagines Ben learned and developed the traits which made him successful and famous. The title of Mayhew's work provides a basic plot summary and reflects the author's attitude toward his subject: *Young Benjamin Franklin; or, The Right Road through Life. A Story to Show How Young Benjamin Learned the Principles which Raised Him from a Printer's Boy to the First Ambassador [sic] of the American Republic. A Boy's Book on a Boy's Own Subject.* Mayhew, London journalist and active advocate for social reform, turned to writing biographies in his later years.

In *Young Benjamin Franklin*, Mayhew imbues his narrative with all the fervor characteristic of his own philanthropic endeavors. The didactic element in the biography runs high, with his intent outlined in the book's preface.

The one purpose of the book is to give young men some sense of the principles that should guide a prudent, honorable, generous, and refined gentleman through the world, . . . to open young eyes to the universe of beauty that encompasses every enlightened spirit, and to give the young knights of the present day some faint idea of the chivalry of life, as well as to develop in them some little sense of, and tastes for, the poetry of action and the grace of righteous conduct. (vii, viii)

Anticipating a renewed interest in medievalism of the late nineteenth century as well as building upon the chivalric code of honor popularized by Scott, Mayhew sets up his young readers as "little knights," ready to develop the refinement and virtue needed for knighthood. In this context, Franklin too takes on a gentlemanly/knightly aura as Mayhew retrofits the prototypic American in English armor. This Victorianization of the image becomes an important link for later American biographers and novelists who rework the success formula during the late nineteenth century.

In many ways, Mayhew writes a British success handbook in fictional form. Using selected factual elements from the *Autobiography*, Mayhew introduces Franklin's English godfather, Uncle Benjamin, as a central figure in his narrative, a preceptor who guides Franklin and helps him develop a Poor-Richard quality of mind. Mayhew explains that Uncle Benjamin is not purely imaginary, for Franklin refers to such an uncle, and, according to Mayhew, must have learned his morality and diligence from someone. Uncle Benjamin, then, becomes the "exponent of the Franklin view of life," the generative and motivating influence upon "printer-embassador's 'Poor Richardism'" (x). Mayhew confesses that Uncle Ben "has been elaborated into greater importance here, certainly, than he assumes in the biography of his nephew; but this has been done upon that Shakeperian [sic] rule of art, which often throws an internal moral principle into an external *dramatis persona*" (ix). Mayhew's hope lies in giving young readers a sense of the teachings Franklin "might have received (and doubtless *did* receive)" (viii) as a boy. Paralleling

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (one of young Benjamin's own acknowledged models) more than the *Autobiography*, Mayhew uses Uncle Ben to tutor young Franklin in reaching the "celestial city," which for Franklin means finding his life's profession. Franklin finds happiness in the end (reaches his "celestial city") when he decides upon the printing profession, a vocation that will bring him fame, power, and fortune. During this process, Ben also has his eyes opened "to the universe of beauty," which then becomes the end of material success. We especially see evident in the book an integration of the ideology of the success cult with the middle class values of the Protestant ethic, as ideologies of the nineteenth century continue to fuse. Mayhew, with intentions never fully realized, hopes that the

principles, in fine, that have cost the author [i.e., Mayhew] a life to acquire, are often expressed . . . sufficiently in keeping with the current of the story to render it difficult for the reader to detect where the function of dramatizing ends and that of propounding begins. (xii)

The novel begins with Mayhew depicting an idyllic domestic scene in Franklin's home, complete with the father working, the mother at a spinning wheel, and a house full of children busily engaged in some useful task or pleasant amusement. Franklin, in his teens when the story begins, is described as "a pretty chubby-faced boy, with a pair of cheeks rosy and plump as ripe peaches" (18). Mayhew makes no pretense to follow the events chronicled in the *Autobiography*, though at times he borrows anecdotes as a means to further a particular point in his own narrative. In those instances where he uses actual events from Franklin's life, Mayhew usually footnotes the actual passage from the *Autobiography*, a practice unique to his biography in what appears to be an attempt to legitimize and verify his own creative rendition.

The concept of home becomes central to Mayhew's depiction of the Franklin family, reflecting the importance of domestic relations in the Victorian era. The home not only serves as the repository of virtue but as a moral training ground for Benjamin to learn how to become a responsible adult. Of particular importance are the females in Franklin's

family, his mother and sister clearly depicted within the emerging cult of domesticity. As domestic "angels" (a term borrowed from Coventry Patmore's popular poem *The Angel in the House* [1854]), they embody the kindly and gentle virtues. Both typify what Deborah Gorham depicts as the traditional Victorian woman, a female who greets a husband, son, father, or brother with "smiling faces, cheerful voices, and a quietly happy welcome which will fall like balm on his harassed spirit" (38). Furthermore, they are "creatures whose self-forgetfulness, whose willingness to help others, . . . creates a harmonious environment" (38). Franklin's mother, Abiah, and sister, Jane, both act in this way, at times serving as arbitrator between Benjamin and his oftentimes stern father, a character often representing the harsh realities of the world outside the home. Though the roles of the females are relatively minor in Mayhew's biography, they nonetheless help maintain the equilibrium essential to Ben's development.

The central conflict depicted in the beginning of the story revolves around Franklin's dissatisfaction resulting from his employment in his father's shop.

Indeed, the boy's life of late had been one continual struggle and fight between his inclinations and his duty. For the last two years he had been supposed to be engaged at his father's business, though, from the work being any thing but a "labor of love" to him, he had really been occupied with other things. (20-21)

Rather than working diligently at the candle-making trade, Franklin busies himself with others amusements, only returning to the work at hand when hearing footsteps of someone coming into the shop. Living "within a stone's throw of the beautiful Bay of Massachusetts," his earliest thoughts, games, and play centered around the water, and as Franklin grows dissatisfied with his father's business, he dreams of going to sea. On one occasion Franklin is reading *Robinson Crusoe*, a favorite book of his, when his father calls him to bring in some wicks Franklin should have had prepared. Knowing the retribution which will follow for not completing the task in the allotted time, Benjamin implores his mother to go in to his father instead and plead her son's case. Abiah urges her son to go and confess his idleness openly with a contrite heart, knowing her husband will expect

nothing less. Franklin does confess, but that night after being punished, he determines to run away.

Intrigued by Franklin's desire to go to sea and impelled by his own youth, Mayhew depicts Benjamin attempting to join the crew of a ship anchored in Boston harbor. Mayhew himself had run away to sea, sailing to Calcutta and back, and no doubt sympathizing with Ben's desires, shows him sneaking down to the docks and trying to convince a ship's captain to take him on. Unfortunately, the captain recognizes and apprehends Franklin. Meanwhile, the family notices his absence, and only through the pleas for leniency from Franklin's mother and uncle does Benjamin escape extraordinary punishment from his father. In this instance Uncle Ben (as Mayhew calls him) steps forth as his godson's advocate and begins to take an active role in his nephew's training. Abiah feels such gratitude for her brother-in-law's intercession that she convinces Josiah to let his brother take charge of their son's training. Uncle Ben reasons with Josiah to let young Benjamin look for another trade, and the father relents and embraces his son.

"Give me your hand sir," said Josiah to little Benjamin; "let us be better friends than we have been, and to-morrow you shall choose a trade for yourself."

"Oh, thank you, father, thank you," exclaimed the delighted lad; and that night he told his joys to his Guinea-pig, and slept as he had never done before. (75)

Complete with the nice Victorian touch of the pet guinea pig, Franklin and his father are reconciled, and the scene is set for the Rousseauian preceptor, Uncle Ben, to guide his young charge in finding a vocation and becoming a responsible adult. At total odds with the *Autobiography*, where Josiah takes his son around to observe various craftsmen in Boston, Mayhew makes no pretense to remain true to the original account when it fails to meet his purposes.

From the beginning of Franklin's new training, his uncle stresses the value of work and perseverance, virtues which continue as an important subtext throughout the story. Because Benjamin has no "sense of the necessity or nobility of work," Uncle Ben sees him

as "little better than a pup of eight days old; and until his mind's eye is fairly opened, it is idle to expect him to have the least insight into the higher uses and duties of life" (76-77). Franklin's uncle sets out quickly to teach his young charge the foundational values necessary to choose a profession. Early the next morning, Ben receives a new fishing rod and tackle, and he and his uncle set out to find a place to fish. He wonders, "What ever can this have to do with the choice of a trade?" (77). After they have been out for some time and caught a number of large fish, Uncle Ben asks his nephew if he knows why they have come. Franklin responds saying, "to teach me, uncle, that every thing that lives seeks after its food" (81).

"Hardly *that*, my little man," replied the uncle, "for I should have thought your own unguided reason would have shown you as much ere this. What I really want to impress upon you, Ben, is rather the *vital necessity* for work. The lesson I wish to teach you is not a very deep one, my lad, but one that requires to be firmly engraven on the mind." (81-82)

The two then look around and observe the activity of the insects, birds, beasts, and fish, seeing the busyness of all creatures. "Even if we sit still, our body is at work," says Uncle Ben, "--the heart beating, the lungs playing, the chest heaving, the blood circulating" (84). Uncle Benjamin reinforces the point with a motto that becomes the young boy's first lesson in life, "*Work, beggary, or death!*" (85). This duly impresses young Ben, and at the end of the day he exclaims to his uncle,

You have given me thoughts I never knew before. Let me go home and tell my father and mother how different a boy you have made me, and my future life shall show you how much I owe to this day's lesson. (85)

This lesson has sufficient impact upon Franklin that in just one evening his parents note that there is a "marked change" in his behavior, that he is quite "a different lad" (86). They commend Uncle Benjamin and implore him to continue his work with their son.

The next day Franklin's uncle takes him to Boston harbor, and the two take a small boat out to sea. A nice breeze carries the little craft far out into the open water while Uncle Benjamin discourses upon Columbus and the discovery of America. He enumerates all the hardships Columbus encountered, praising the explorers perseverance in the face of

difficulty. Awed by the story, Franklin muses, "*will* discovered the land, and *will* peopled it" (96). Through his exegesis, Uncle Benjamin impresses Franklin with the second fundamental of success--perseverance--which ranks next to the cardinal virtue of industry. Franklin learns that "the mere repetition of acts at *frequent* and *regular* intervals . . . should make them, however difficult and distasteful at first, grow easy and congenial to us in time; that it should change pain into pleasure, labor into pastime" (102).

As Uncle Benjamin sets out to teach the various lessons he deems crucial to his nephew's development, we see a crucial shift in the method of instruction used.

Abandoning a still used but declining method of inscribing authority, corporal punishment, Uncle Ben favors what Richard Brodhead terms "disciplinary intimacy" (70). Citing authors of child-rearing manuals of the mid-nineteenth century, Brodhead observes that the primary role of parents (or in the instance of Mayhew's book, Uncle Ben as the parental-like mentor) is to have the "otherwise abstract principle of all duty impersonated in his parents, and thus brought home to his practical embrace" (71). A "human face" affixed to abstract values and expectations then allows "a purposeful sentimentalization of the . . . relation: a strategic relocation of authority relations in the realm of emotion and a conscious intensification of the emotional bond between the authority figure and its charge" (71). Whereas Brodhead sees the disciplinary agents as women, a male transformation occurs in many post-Civil War narratives with greater focus on the mentor relationship between males. What this means in terms of Mayhew's work is that affection and kindness replace authoritarian coercion and punishment. Additionally, the self-reliant, self-made man gives way to a type of "buddy" system or mentoring, methods of instruction which become central to the next important phase of the Franklinian myth in the fiction of Horatio Alger. Like much of the domestic literature of the time, Mayhew brings about Franklin's maturity through the love and guidance of an interested preceptor, for "enmeshing the child in the strong bonds of love is the way the authority introduces its charge to its imperatives and norms" (Brodhead 72).

We see Uncle Ben's genuine affection for his nephew on numerous occasions, as in the gentle prodding and quiet instruction continuing through their sailing adventure. In addition to the lesson on Columbus, Benjamin learns how to effectively sail and master a small vessel. Various discussions of will and perseverance, reinforced by stories about the Pilgrims and of Peter the Great, intersperse the sailing activities of the day, and Uncle Ben reminds Franklin that moral men succeed in life "using the will to strengthen the good and virtuous impulses of our nature, rather than to control the bad and vicious ones; that is to say, by making the will work *with us* instead of *against us*" (113). As evening approaches and the lesson ends, the two realize that they are miles away from the shore, with little prospect of a favorable breeze to get them back to the harbor. Deferring to his nephew as to how to resolve the dilemma that confronts them, Uncle Ben delights in Benjamin's bewilderment at the idea of rowing back to shore. Though Franklin sees the task as impossible, for Uncle Benjamin the predicament affords "the finest opportunity of proving, in a practical manner, *the power of will in you*" (120). Uncle Ben rouses his nephew's energy and faith in himself by reminding him of the will of Columbus, of the Pilgrims, and of Peter the Great, as well as the trust his parents have in him, and Franklin rises to the situation. "I'll do it! I'll do it, uncle! You shall see tonight what a man you have made of me. Ay, and father and mother shall see it too" (121). Though the task at hand proves difficult,

nevertheless, [Franklin] labored on and on, resolute in accomplishing the task. Indeed, his pride increased rather than flagged as he drew nearer to the harbor lights, so that when his uncle urged him to rest on his oars for a while, he scorned to listen to the suggestion, and fell to redoubled vigor. (122)

With blistered hands and sore muscles, Franklin finally reaches the harbor,

and when the little hero stepped from the boat on to the landing-place, he felt, though his arms were cramped with the long labor, that he was really a new man; that he had learned for the first time in his life to have faith in his own energies, and had found out by experience that *a strong will can master difficulties which seem insuperable to a weak heart.* (125)

With no elaboration or further moral drawn upon the boating incident, the next chapter begins with a startling anachronism as Franklin and his uncle ride on horseback towards the western frontier. They emerge from the woods onto a "vast open plain," with "the long, luxuriant grass of the broad meadows before them reach[ing] so high above the belly of the shock-coated pony" (125, 126). This mythical trip to the prairies, impossible in the early eighteenth century, would have become in reality an integral part of American expansion over a century later at the time of Mayhew's writing. The trip and ultimate destination, which serves as backdrop to one of Benjamin's most important lessons, would from a British perspective be seen as a distinctly "American" experience.

As the two look out over the expansive plains before them, Benjamin is astounded when his uncle declares they have reached their destination.

"I know, boy, there is not a homestead nearer than a day's ride," answered the godfather, still inwardly enjoying the fun of the boy's bewilderment, and patting on the shoulder, now that he was fairly dismounted, the old "nag-horse" that had borne him from St. Louis that morning.  
"Nevertheless, this is our journey's end, Master Benjamin." (126)

Again, the anachronistic reference to St. Louis suggests Mayhew's lack of concern for factual accuracy. Rather, he sees it as being completely proper to place undoubtedly the most representative American in British eyes in an unmistakably American setting. As they make camp, Uncle Benjamin implores Franklin to have patience, for though they have been on the road for three weeks, the intent of the visit will soon be revealed. The two reflect on the previous adventures they have shared together and the lessons Franklin has learned. Uncle Ben then proceeds to tell his nephew why they have come to the wilderness.

"I dare say, my little man, it *does* seem strange to you," replied the uncle, "and doubtlessly it will seem much stranger when I tell you that I have brought you all this long way from home--many hundreds of miles--to this vast uninhabited plain to teach you . . . how to be rich." (129)

Franklin thinks it an odd place to learn about getting rich, especially since all that he sees is "a great barren plain for miles and miles on" (130). Uncle Benjamin rejoins, "This is an American prairie, lad! . . . one of God's own parks--creation's broad manor, of which

every man in a primitive state is 'lord'--the noble estate which Nature entails on her barbarian children" (130). Having never seen a prairie, Franklin's omniscient uncle instructs him about all the local flora and fauna. After his uncle's tutorial, Franklin then sees before him "the Eden of the New World" (135).

After surveying their surroundings, Uncle Ben begins explaining why he has brought Franklin to the prairie and what connection it has with the next lesson.

He sought to teach, indeed, as artists sketch, "from Nature," because he had long noted how strongly the associations of place serve to link together ideas in the memory. Hence, in all his counsulings, he had ever one object in view, which was to make the lesson he desired to inculcate, not a mere flitting phantasm or shadowy ghost of a truth, but a principle, instinct with all the vigor of life itself; and to do this, he sought to mix it up with some strange sight and event of boyhood. (137)

Uncle Benjamin then begins to expound upon the resources that Nature yields and how population grows accordingly. This carefully crafted natural setting and approach to Benjamin's instruction reflects the continuing influence of Rousseau, that a child should be encouraged in his curiosities and natural inclinations, guided and aided by an interested preceptor who manipulates his environment to bring about desired results. Also echoing Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* (1754), Benjamin's uncle tells him how civilization destroys the simplicity of the natural life, with men becoming more concerned with appropriation and production than living simply and naturally. Such growth and development leads to inequalities, and two distinct classes emerge: "masters and men, rich and poor" (142).

As the discussion continues, Franklin awakens to the realization that "the prudent people in the world become rich, and the imprudent make the poor" (142). Of course, some are born into indigent circumstances, but this results mainly from "their parents' or forefathers' thrift, or the want of it" (142). He observes that "the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children unto the third and fourth generations" (142). Naturally, Benjamin wonders how individuals break this cycle (his own circumstances less than favorable), and his uncle explains that many acquire wealth by "force of arms rather than industry and

frugality," but that truly moral individuals can do so by prudence. Prudence, assures Uncle Ben, differs from miserliness nor meanness; it

is simply that wise worldly caution which comes of foresight regarding the circumstances that are likely to affect our own happiness. Morally considered, it is the heroism of enlightened selfishness--intellectually regarded, it is the judgment counseling the heart; while in a religious point of view it is the divine element of "Providence" narrowed down to the limits of human knowledge and human vision. (145)

Wise men, continues Uncle Ben, live primarily in or for the future, and prudence prepares one for that. Here, the third supreme virtue, prudence, is added to the previous two components of success: industry and perseverance. This frugality, so embedded in the Franklin image, is seen not as meanness or miserliness, charges early twentieth-century critics would level--but, rather, as Mayhew puts it in such a delightfully euphemistic phrase, as an "enlightened selfishness."

Uncle Benjamin continues his discussion by turning to the subject of economics, expounding on ownership of property, rent, capital, and the like. He tells his nephew that capital is as productive as land itself; discreetly used, it yields crop after crop of profits; and interest for money is but the rent or share that the wealthy reserve to themselves for the use of their property, when applied to productive purposes by others. . . . And as the scale of rent is equivalent merely to the comparative fertility of different soils, so the rate of interest expresses only the value of capital in the market, according to the individual risk or the general want of money. (149, 150)

Franklin begins to understand this as his uncle sums up the lesson with the declaration, "money makes money." Uncle Ben suggests that any saved income which one appropriately puts to work through some sort of investment (either in the market or in goods such as farm or business supplies) produces additional income. Ben observes, "It is good, then, to save, uncle" (150). His uncle concludes,

It is as good to save and use wealth discreetly, my lad, as it is base to hoard and lock it up, and wicked to squander and waste it. Saving, indeed, is no mean virtue. Not only does it require high self-denial in order to forego the immediate pleasure which wealth in hand can always obtain for its possessors, but it needs as much intellectual strength to perceive the future good with all the vividness of a present benefit as it does moral control to restrain the propensities of the time being for the enjoyment of happiness in years to come. Again, boy, it is merely by the frugality of civilized

communities that cities are built, the institutions of society maintained, and all the complex machinery of enlightened industry and commerce kept in operation. (150-151)

The figure of Franklin already imbued with the characteristics implicit in Poor Richard now begins to appropriate those of the capitalist; consequently, it is of little wonder that German sociologist Max Weber chose Franklin as the essence of what he called the Protestant Ethic, selecting the early American to embody "in almost classical purity," the "*spirit*" of capitalism (47, 48). This view of Franklin, typical of the Gilded Age, reinforced the notion of postponing present pleasure for future reward, or, in Franklinian terms, of saving and working hard. The context of capitalism becomes more crucial to subsequent writers like Alger who not only refashion the existing myth but create new ones, reflecting new economic and ideological factors.

As Uncle Benjamin continues his discussion of financial matters, his artful reasoning and persuasion impresses his nephew with the importance of prudence. He concludes with a final argument as to frugality's social value and an appropriate maxim by which Franklin can remember the valuable lesson.

You see now the high social use of saving, Ben. It not only gives riches to the rich, remember, but it provides work and food for the poor; for the prosperous man who duly husbands his gains benefits at once himself and those who have been less lucky or prudent than he. Nor is this all. It is by saving alone that a man can emancipate himself from the primeval doom of life-long labor. . . . By prudence, Ben I repeat, we may become the masters of the world; by imprudence, we must remain the bondsmen of it. In a word, you must save, or be a slave, lad. (152-153)

Clearly, Mayhew's rhetoric reflects the specific capitalist definition of prudence as that of saving money, a concept Weber develops as he discusses selections from Franklin's "Necessary Hints to Those Who Would Be Rich" and "Advice to a Young Tradesmen," works he sees embodying this capitalistic tenet (50-54). With this important lesson appropriately impressed upon his young pupil's mind, along with the previous ones learned, Uncle Ben can now assist his nephew in resolving the main dilemma of the narrative: choosing a profession.

With little transition from the prairie experience, Uncle Benjamin and his young charge appear back in Boston, intent now upon the final polishing of young Franklin. Though the reader anticipates that Franklin will soon find his chosen vocation, Mayhew (via Uncle Benjamin) still feels the need for additional character development before Franklin (and by inference the reader) can make such an important decision. The two travelers now in Boston rehearse the events of the past few weeks, and Uncle Ben recaps how he has taught his nephew "to become a *rich man*" (162). In language typifying a fusion of the new capitalist and the old patrician, he says in summary that, "To teach a lad to be self-reliant is teach him to have a soul above beggary; it is to make an independent gentleman of him, even while he is laboring for his living" (162). Continuing to elaborate on the virtue of obtaining wealth, Uncle Benjamin refutes his brother Josiah's concern over the danger of all-consuming mammon.

All men may covet wealth, brother, but that few know the way to win even a competence is proven by the misery of the great mass of the people. I want to see comfort reign throughout the world instead of squalor; competence rather than want; self-reliance rather than beggary; independence rather than serfdom. I wish to teach a man to get money rather than want it or beg for it; to get money with honor and dignity; and, what is more, to spend it with honor and dignity too. And, please God, that is the high lesson you boy shall learn before I have done with him. (164)

While Mayhew's book promotes the way to wealth in a manner similar to success manuals of the era, he maintains the religious and patrician frame of equating wealth with moral worthiness and of rising from serfdom to gentlemanly respectability. Fortune comes to educated, morally upright individuals. Implicit in such passages is the high/low distinction between classes, a differentiation Mayhew makes more dramatically later in the narrative as he introduces Ben to the inhabitants of jails and poorhouses.

Continuing with the theme of money-making, Uncle Benjamin asks Franklin what he would do if given a half dollar. Ben remembers that it would be foolish to spend it immediately, so replies that he would save it. "What, hoard it, eh?" queries his uncle. In a response appropriate for a soon to be self-made man, Ben responds, "Why, when I'd

saved up enough, I should use it as capital to start me in some business, and so make it the means of getting more money" (171). To ensure that Franklin has the moral character necessary to use money appropriately and to help him find a vocation suited to his interests, talents, and abilities, the two proceed on an errand that closely parallels the narrative of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*. In a chapter entitled "Pleasure-Hunting" Uncle Benjamin sets out with his nephew under the ruse of touring the "great Museum of Natural History" (another anachronistic touch designed to suggest a nineteenth-century environment capable of opening young eyes "to the universe of beauty"), but the two are sidetracked through city streets where they observe individuals engaged in various trades and who exhibit various personality traits, some worthy of emulation. Though Franklin wonders how this relates to how one should spend money, he and his uncle encounter what Mayhew calls sixteen "rational animals," seeing everything from a botanist, sportsman, inventor, astronomer, politician, chemist, artist, and musician to a drunkard, miser, epicure, and fashion-monger--suggestive of possible professions for the young boy.

After seeing these varied individuals and the passions which drive them, Franklin wonders aloud to his uncle, "of all the queer people we have seen, and the many queer tastes and fancies we have found them indulging in, which do *you* really think now is right?" (225). With a philosophic sigh, Uncle Ben discusses the precariousness of the many passions which leads men to choose various paths and professions.

[T]here are so many different roads to happiness in this life, that unless we have the ground we are to travel over clearly mapped out before our eyes, it is difficult to say off-hand which is the shortest cut, or even the cleanest or most agreeable way to it. Unfortunately, too, there is no sign-post set up at the point where the different cross-roads meet to direct us along the right path, or to say, "THIS LEADS TO MISERY" -- "THIS IS THE ROAD TO RUIN" -- "THIS IS THE NEAREST WAY TO SHAME" -- "THIS IS THE HIGHWAY TO FOLLY," and so on; so that when we come to this juncture in our journey through life, and stand deliberating as to which of the many turnings we had better take, why, we may be led by an infinity of circumstances to strike into the wrong path, and find out, when it is too late to retrace our steps, that what we fancied at starting to be a perfect palace in the distance, surrounded by the most extensive pleasure-grounds, is merely the poor-house, or the county jail, or some great lunatic asylum after all. (235-236)

With this, Uncle Ben evades answering his godson's real question, deferring it to a later time when Franklin has learned a little more. Again, in the Rousseauian tradition, Ben's uncle carefully manipulates situations as he guides his young charge to adult maturity.

Now that Uncle Benjamin has appropriately baited his nephew and sufficiently aroused his curiosity, he proceeds to instruct him further in the traits necessary to find happiness, for in an image recalling Locke, he observes, "there's nothing like making an impression while the wax is warm" (236). The two proceed a distance from town and sit on a large rock uninterrupted in the countryside. Uncle Ben expounds upon the different kinds of pleasure (i.e., the "universe of beauty") humans are susceptible to, first categorizing eight types of pleasures: pleasure of senses, sensuous pleasure itself, pleasure of health, pleasure of exercise, pleasure of appetite, pleasure of physical excitement, and pleasure of habit. Uncle Ben shows the desirability and benefit of each of these pleasures, but warns that one must maintain proper restraint and control. Though the discriminating knowledge between these pleasures and their appropriate uses can "be gained only by profound reflection and long attention to the matter" (236-237), Uncle Ben tries to elucidate the differences to his young charge. The appropriate control and balance of these pleasures, according to his uncle, becomes the business of life.

After a lengthy discussion the first evening, the two return a second night to the lonely rock to continue their discussion of the controlling the pleasures of life. Mayhew again reminds us that the intent of the dialogue is to solve "the same subtle problem, 'Which is the right road through life?'" (262). Uncle Ben expounds on the pleasure of the intellect, of mental exercise, of mental excitement, of mental habits, and of art. These pleasures include the beauties of literature, and consequently Mayhew quotes lengthy passages from such writers as Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, and Dickens. In all, the discussion of pleasures takes over one hundred pages of the text. Mayhew merely uses the guise of Franklin to instruct the reader in the manners and actions of a young self-made gentleman, integrating patrician and capitalist ideologies.

With "the lesson of life" nearly ended, Uncle Benjamin knows that one more "chapter [is] to be got by heart; but it was a difficult one to study, and required close and peculiar observation of the world to learn" (348). Despite the difficulty of a lesson, however, young Franklin proves able to understand and assimilate most any idea or virtue in one night, two if particularly strenuous or complex. Early the next morning as the "boy and his godfather were in the streets of Boston, going the rounds of the city once more" (348), Ben queries his uncle where they could possibly be going now.

But old Benjamin Franklin was too cunning a teacher to blunt the edge of what he wanted to cut deeply into the memory by satisfying the lad's desire at once, so he rather strove to fan the flame than damp the ardor of the boy's wonder and consequent inquisitiveness. (348)

Uncle Ben heightens his nephew's anticipation through a long, circuitous path through the city. Franklin is honestly astounded when his uncle reveals that they are going to spend the day at the jail, for therein one can see the "end of the road to ruin in this life" (352).

The lengthy development criminal life which follows reflects Mayhew's own personal concern for social reform. Seen as one of the writers to pursue philanthropic journalism in behalf of the London poor, Mayhew became known first for a series of articles entitled "London Labor and Poor," and then for his later work, "The Criminal Prisons of London." Influenced by the more popular and successful English author, Charles Dickens, Mayhew also tried his hand as a playwright, using drama as a means to convey his social criticism. In his later years he turned to writing biographies for a juvenile audience, and work reflects his continuing reform impulse. Never as successful as Dickens in his fictional crusades against abuses like imprisonment for debt, a Dickensian style and sentimentality are clearly present in Mayhew, characteristics which later become evident in Alger.

Uncle Ben and his nephew stop in front of a large dreary building, Franklin is told that what he sees is "the *House*," a name given to the structure by its inhabitants. Mayhew places the criminally poor near the "lowest rungs of the [social] ladder," and he has little

sympathy for those who cannot pay their debts because of idleness and frivolousness. With genuine feeling, however, for those clearly desirous of a better life and willing but unable to work, Mayhew imitates Dickens as he attempts to show the unkindness and hypocrisy of the poorhouse overseers and chaplains. Consequently, Ben does not know which he dislikes more: Elizabeth Davis, one of the inmates of the poor house, or the master of the place. Despite the social commentary Mayhew attempts to make to promote reform, he clearly develops the poorhouse scenes to create an aversion within young Franklin to the lifestyle which leads to incarceration, the virtues opposite of those the entire book has extolled. Mayhew describes the poorhouse in sensual detail.

Once in the passages, the smell of pauperism was marked and strong. The whole place reeked with the true poor-house perfume, which was a compound of the peculiar odor of bread, gruel, treacle, corduroys, pea-soup, soft soap, boiled rice and washing; and as Ben and his uncle followed the master, who went along with his keys jangling like a wagon-team, the yellow sand kept scrunching as though it were so much sugar under the feet; for not a board nor a flagstone in the place but was as scrupulously clean and carefully sanded as the entrance to a livery-stable. (365)

From here, Uncle Benjamin takes Franklin "lower and lower still" as they go to a felon's prison. Mayhew depicts the place in an even more horrific way with men chained in handcuffs and irons and with an odious smell permeating the entire compound, dramatizing the sense of high and low class with even greater detail. Hundreds of jailed youths serve to frighten and warn Franklin and in turn the reader of the consequences of waywardness. In an attempt to give greater credibility to the account (similar to his footnoting the *Autobiography*), Mayhew adds the following note to an extended dialogue among some of the incarcerated youth.

There is no fiction in the above answers of the boys. These, and those which follow, are simply the replies of the young thieves at the boys' prison in Westminster, which were taken down verbatim by the author at the time of his visit to Tothill Fields' House of Correction in the year 1856. ( 390)

Benjamin learns that many of these boys have good natures but have been led astray by various vices, both their own and those of their parents, by such things as dishonesty, gambling, and intemperance. He also sees the female side of the jail, and how many

infants are actually raised in such a detestable environment. Crimes of the women range from bigamy to infanticide. Seeing the wide array of felons, Uncle Ben appropriately impresses Franklin with the horrors of an ill-lived life and the end of those who fail to live according to the principles he has set forth.

From the prison scene Mayhew switches back to the Franklin home and allows Uncle Benjamin to expound further on the finishing characteristics of a successful man. Mayhew seems to suggest that an entrepreneurial self-made man can also be cultured and cultivated. Mayhew provides list of standard and classical reading, many titles mentioned in the *Autobiography*, suggesting that the reader too can work at self-education. Books by Shakespeare, Milton, Bunyan, Defoe, and Mather, as well as Plutarch and Josephus and others appear on the shelves of Uncle Benjamin's library. Mayhew also shows Benjamin reading the Bible with his uncle, mentioning verses on charity and good works as particular favorites. A testimony of Uncle Ben's and in turn Franklin's belief in a divine being concludes a session of scripture reading as both uncle and nephew confess their debt to Providence, in language strikingly similar to Franklin's own such acknowledgment in the *Autobiography*. What Mayhew does here and in other instances is take portions of the *Autobiography* and create what he sees as a probable genesis for Franklin's thoughts and actions.

In a lengthy chapter entitled, "A Peep into the Heart," Mayhew then catalogues various virtues which he sees as essential for any successful man to cultivate and delineates certain vices to avoid. He categorizes these traits as either selfish or unselfish emotions, and for over seventy pages develops what he calls the ABCs of morality. The chapter reminds the discriminating reader of Franklin's own discussion of morality and the useful virtues listed in Part Two of the *Autobiography*, sometimes referred to as the plan for moral perfection. Though few of the thirteen virtues receive any extended discussion in Uncle Ben's sermonizing, the idea of improvement and developing worthy traits and habits appears strikingly similar. Again, the idea of Uncle Ben inspiring much of Franklin's later

philosophy and thinking is unquestionably evident, reinforcing the preceptor pattern so important in nineteenth-century works for children. The diminutive title, "A Peep into the Heart," is suggestive of the scriptural injunction, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." For Mayhew this allusion suggests the need to "treasure" moral virtues within the heart, which in turn would result in morality and gentlemanly honor. Ironically, monetary treasure would be at the "heart" of the capitalist's association, an interpretation that Weber and others later see and condemn.

Mayhew continues his discussion of morality in the next chapter, "The Still Small Voice," with another diminutive title alluding to the scriptural reference to conscience and the Holy Ghost. After elaborating on the role of conscience and the ability to discern the truth and right, Uncle Benjamin, fearing his godson may think his mentor grows too religious, assures Franklin that "I'm not talking religion to you. I am merely endeavoring to help you to spell out the laws of the heart, lad--the commands of what is called the conscience" (509). Ben's aged advisor speaks of how opinion, both that which we hold of ourselves and that which others hold of us, affects our actions, and that we must always strive to follow the convictions of our own heart, sentiments strikingly similar to the Transcendental movement, Thoreau in particular. The discussion of morality ends with a closing warning against the danger of pride and vanity, and the time that Franklin can choose a profession finally approaches.

One week after his last lesson on morality, Franklin comes bounding into his uncle's room, "Oh, uncle, I've chosen a trade at last" (549). With a sort of twenty questions game, Uncle Benjamin begins to ask questions that delineate the nature of the chosen vocation. In essence, Mayhew reviews for the last time the guiding virtues one should cultivate for provident living and working. Franklin's own father, Josiah, has had a change of heart towards his son, and has personally assisted Franklin in choosing a trade. "He's taken me round to see all the different kinds of businesses in town," babbles an excited Ben, "and he said I could choose for myself" (550). Mayhew footnotes this

statement with the simple statement, "a fact," again attempting in some small way to relink his story to the historical narrative, giving credibility to the former. Of course, Franklin has chosen to become a printer, and his uncle elicits an explanation as to why he selected this trade.

Why, uncle, because I remembered all the nice things you told me about the pleasures of good books, and I thought if I became a printer it would be having a business and the best of all amusements too. (557-558)

The youth's decision pleases his aged mentor, who exacts one last promise from his charge: "Promise me . . . that in [later] life, when any mean or savage thought crosses your mind, you'll think of Uncle Ben, and beat down the ugly impulse before it has time to express itself in action" (558). Franklin readily consents, and Uncle Benjamin darts hurriedly from the room, crying, "Good-night! May God bless you" (558).

Later, a feast day, another Dickensian touch, is set aside for the celebration of Franklin's decision, and the whole family rejoices over Franklin's new lot in life. Uncle Benjamin gives the toast of the evening as the festivities conclude: "Health and success to young Benjamin Franklin; and may he live to be the man we wish him" (561). Peace and contentment reigns through the Franklin home as never before. As the story concludes, Franklin goes to wish his uncle good night and offer his final thanks.

So down he scampered, unshod as he was, and with only his little knee-breeches and his shirt to cover him, burst suddenly into the old man's room.

Uncle Ben was on his knees beside his bed; and as the little fellow crept up and stooped to kiss him, he felt that the cheek of his best friend in the world was all wet with tears--

Tears that the godson never forgot--no, not even when the practice of the godfather's philosophy had made him the first ambassador [*sic*] from the American Republic. (561)

Similar to of his literary progenitor Dickens, Mayhew adds a dose of sentimentality to these closing scenes with the tears and embrace between the now initiated boy and his uncle.

While Mayhew's book makes no attempt to follow the historical narrative of Franklin's life, it does, as Mayhew states in the preface, attempt to be true to a notion of what may have happened, to explain how Franklin came to possess the traits Victorian

readers would have seen as integral to his character. The irony of Mayhew's approach of being "true" to Franklin's life comes in realizing that the Franklin he depicts comes from a revised and fabricated image of earlier writers. Mayhew accepts the previously refashioned persona of the conscientious, hard working, frugal man and its subsequent permutations (including the sanitized, God-fearing saint of Weems), adding his own creative interpolations, subsequently generating a fiction about a fiction. In other words, Mayhew further fictionalizes events of an already mythicized figure. While few mature readers would have believed Mayhew's narrative as factual truth, the effectiveness of the fiction, even if subconsciously, serves to reinforce a reading public's view of Franklin as the living embodiment of Poor Richard and as an example of a gentlemanly self-made capitalist. In reality Mayhew has done no more than write his own brand of a success manual, a treatise on the training of young men.

Stressing new elements such as saving as prudence, along with the dramatized emphasis on the class distinctions, Mayhew provides the antidote for struggling felons and paupers, as well as a model for young readers who prefer to avoid degraded depths. Such depravity is avoided by the aid of the most important addition in Mayhew's Franklin, Uncle Ben. The development of the preceptor figure remains a significant part of children's literature in the tradition of Day's *Sandford and Merton*, for Uncle Ben, like his predecessor Mr. Barlow, functions as the Rousseauian guide to assist young Benjamin on the path to manhood. While Mayhew attempts to tie his narrative to the historical Franklin, a fascinating hybrid figure of the man nonetheless emerges. In the narrative Mayhew's own peculiar brand of success and manliness surfaces, just as Weems' view of religion saturated his biography earlier. In Mayhew, we see an important link from the early century to the image of Franklin crafted by subsequent biographers and writers, most notably Horatio Alger.

## CHAPTER 5

### MASTER OF FICTION: ALGER AND THE GILDED AGE

Though few other authors take Mayhew's poetic license to completely reinvent figure of Franklin, fictionalizing events in his life grows more prominent in biographies after the Civil War, as the archetype of the "poor boy who makes good" becomes more dominant in fiction. Perhaps more than any other writer of fiction for juvenile readers, Horatio Alger, Jr., ranks foremost among those associated with the "rags-to-riches" or self-made man motif we have seen developing. Though Alger's status as a proponent of entrepreneurial competition has been inflated in this century, Alger's fiction does play an important role in the Gilded Age's ideology of success.<sup>1</sup> While today Alger is seen primarily as a juvenile author, earlier interest in his books extended far beyond the adolescent reader, as his name, like Franklin's, became a late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century "shibboleth invoked by the American cult of success" (Schamhorst x, 83). Fifty years following Alger's death, he had so successfully transformed and appropriated the Franklin image that the distinction of being an "Horatio Alger hero" became formalized as an official award and medal bearing his name, which recognized those who through their own efforts rose to success from indigent circumstances. Over time Alger, like Franklin, became mythicized, with his name representing an individual who gained respectability and financial independence through his own efforts, exhibiting qualities of the prototypic self-made man (Huber 43-44). The crucial role of the Rousseauian mentor figure, central to most of Alger's novels, was diminished by subsequent proponents of success who all but ignored the preceptor's fundamental role obtaining wealth and respectability.

Though Alger himself was an Harvard-educated minister who worked for a time as a cleric in Brewster, Massachusetts, his heroes usually came from indigent circumstances with no worldly privileges or favors, who subsequently achieved success by demonstrating many of the qualities associated with Franklin: industry, frugality, and moral integrity. While popular literature like Alger's further ingrained the prudence of saving and the value of postponing present gratification for future rewards, qualities Weber identified with the Protestant ethic, it concomitantly reflected the importance society placed on improving one's mind and social standing through self-education. Moreover, readers of Alger's fiction saw in his novels a relatively unreserved endorsement of competitive capitalism, whether Alger in reality felt that way or not. Selective misreading of Alger, like the earlier narrow reading of Franklin, served to increase the popularity of the self-made man and social mobility, further emphasizing Franklin as a prophet of success and marketplace competition.

While Alger never wrote a biography of Franklin, many portions of his novels are clearly modeled after incidents from Franklin's *Autobiography*, a source Alger never seemed to tire of. As Gary Schamhorst, the most recent and most accurate Alger biographer, has observed,

Alger did not exhaust his interest in Franklin by recurrently depicting scenes from the *Autobiography*. . . . Franklin's appeal during the Gilded Age was pervasive, as Louis B. Wright has explained, because "by a credible though partial perception" of Franklin's philosophy he became the "high priest of the religion of commercial success." By offering Franklin as a model worthy of emulation, Alger paradoxically served his eighteenth-century didactic purpose and remained topical in the late nineteenth century. It is not surprising, then, that five of his heroes and two of his patrons are named Ben, one patron claims to be descended from Franklin, and even the name "Ragged Dick" seems less Alger's invention than a rephrasing of "Poor Richard." Three of Alger's heroes deliberately model their lives after Franklin, and three others directly quote his adages. (69)

The formulaic rise to success, characteristic of most every Alger novel, can be seen in his first juvenile novel and only best seller of his lifetime, *Ragged Dick*, which serves as a model for Alger's later stories. Most novels feature a virtuous, youthful boy who is

thrust into the treacherous adult world to struggle for a living. Generally, the protagonist at some time enters the city, and it is often a permanent removal from the country to an urban setting, a symbolic movement to a place of opportunity where he encounters a variety of individuals. Through perseverance he gains a measure of financial independence and social respectability while struggling against a less than virtuous banker, squire, or stepparent. Usually some flawed antagonist foils the socially climbing hero, with an opposing decline of the foil emphasizing the protagonist's rise. The climax and dénouement usually occur with the hero earning the respect of a patron and being rewarded with a job or a reunion with his family. This patron, in turn, becomes a mentor who serves in a supportive and tutorial role, much like Uncle Ben in Mayhew's narrative.

In many instances, this formulaic plot parallels Franklin's depiction of himself in the *Autobiography*. As John Seelye observes, "What is popularly called the Horatio Alger story is a ritualized fiction based on the Franklin formula, a fabulization of the American Dream of success" (110). Born in indigent circumstances, Franklin, like his Algerian counterpoint, goes to a city wherein he overcomes numerous obstacles to achieve a modicum of wealth, an achievement wrought primarily through his diligence, hard work, and unassailable integrity. But the formulas differ in at least two important respects. While in Alger the wealthy benefactor, appearing like a fairy godfather, provides a crucial link to the struggling boy's success, Franklin finds patronage to be disillusioning and ultimately empty, Governor Keith's promises to set him up in business coming to naught. Whether conscious of it or not, Alger's variation reflects a late nineteenth-century reality that with the advent of the large corporation and "big business," very few individuals did or could rise to enormous wealth and station, as in the instances of a Carnegie or Rockefeller. It would have been infinitely more difficult to attain the degree of fortune and notoriety Franklin did in the late nineteenth century, particularly without the aid of a beneficent patron.

The second aspect more pronounced in the Alger plot which differs from Franklin's centers on the importance of the city and its contrast with the country. Franklin can in no way claim rural roots--an important criterion for Alger's heroes--being born and raised in Boston prior to his departure to Philadelphia. Though the entrance into the city is an important dimension in the eventual success of each, it is in some ways circumstantial in Franklin while essential in Alger. With the advent of industrialization following the Civil War, Alger's works reflect an increased emphasis on urbanization. The decline of an agrarian lifestyle and the displacement of workers who sought opportunities in urban centers was a reality that became an important interpolation to the mythic formula for success. In sending his boys to the city, Alger was not only recycling the Franklin pattern, but acknowledging an important contemporary occurrence.

This displacement grows more significant in Alger as it serves to contrast rural virtue and urban vice. Though the city provides the opportunity for economic success and upward mobility, it is fraught with temptation and danger which must be resisted and shunned in the pursuit of one's goal. Alger summarizes this attitude in his 1877 novel *Wait and Hope*, where he contrasts country and city life: "While a large city has more temptations than a small town, it also has more opportunities for improvement" (117-118). The country lad, possessing firm moral character, avoids potential pitfalls, becoming an exemplar and at times a preceptor to others around him. Though his stock heroes occasionally vary from this generalized motif (most notably Ragged Dick), an rural idealism underlies most of Alger's work.

In addition to the obvious parallels between Alger's formula and Franklin's *Autobiography*, specific incidents oft times directly reflect portions of Franklin story. For instance, the symbol of a new suit and watch Franklin uses to mark his initial return to Boston appears in Alger's *Struggling Upward*. Franklin, in describing his trip to Boston, wrote that

My unexpected Appearance surpris'd the Family; all were however very glad to see me and made me Welcome, except my Brother. I went to see him at his Printing-House: I was better dress'd than ever while in his Service, having a genteel new Suit from Head to foot, a Watch, and my Pockets lin'd with near Five Pounds Sterling in Silver. He receiv'd me not very frankly, look'd me all over, and turn'd to his Work again. (24)

The new suit and watch suggest Franklin's prosperity and initial success.

A scene from Alger's *Struggling Upward* strikingly mimics this Franklin incident.

The novel's protagonist, Luke Larkin, returns to his boyhood town and cannot help but show off his new found success to his old rival, Randolph Duncan.

On his way home from school Randolph was destined to be surprised. Not far from his own house he met Luke, arrayed in his new suit, with a chain that looked like gold crossing his waistcoat. Instead of looking confused and ashamed, Luke looked uncommonly bright and cheerful.

Randolph was amazed. What could it all mean? He had intended not to notice Luke, but to pass him with a scornful smile, but his curiosity got the better of him. . . .

"Humph! You seem to have invested in a new suit."

"Yes; my old suit was getting decidedly shabby, as you kindly remarked at Florence Grant's party." . . .

"I see you've got a new watch-chain, too."

Randolph emphasized the word "chain" satirically, being under the impression that no watch was attached.

"Yes; you may like to see my new watch." And Luke, with pardonable triumph, produced his new watch, which was a stem-winder, whereas Randolph's was only a key-winder." . . .

"You seem to have plenty of money," he said, with unpleasant significance. (195, 196)

Alger's hero deflates his rival, and the rest of the novel shows Luke's continued ascension in contrast to Randolph's decline. The new suit of clothes marks, in both instances, the elevation from poverty to at least a degree of respectability, with the watch suggesting even greater position as well as a commitment to work and a respect for time, which for Franklin was money (Scharnhorst 69, Cawelti 118).

No doubt the Alger books most clearly modeled around Franklin's life story are two novels written in the 1870s for Alger's "Luck and Pluck" series. In *Bound to Rise* and its sequel *Risen from the Ranks*, the protagonist Harry Walton first reads Franklin's *Autobiography* and then models his own life after his new found hero. In the preface

Alger outlines the purpose of his novel and alludes to the Franklin connection without mentioning his model by name.

"BOUND TO RISE" probably expresses the determination of many boys who will read this story. It is written in part for the encouragement of those who are actuated by this worthy ambition, and without professing to be the biography of any particular person, will, with its sequel, have some reference to the struggles of two men who have fought their way from poverty and obscurity to a high place on the roll of distinguished Americans. (vii)

Though Alger never tells us who the "two" men he refers to are, they are no doubt Franklin and his nineteenth-century incarnation, Horace Greeley. Alger assures the reader that Harry, the story's protagonist, is not an exception, but "a fair example of a sturdy and energetic country-boy" (vii), who merely makes the most of the circumstances and opportunities around him.

The book begins with Harry excelling in school but needed at home to help with the work in order to save the farm from being mortgaged. Just prior to his quitting school, he wins a prize as best class scholar, a book about the "life of the great American philosopher and statesman, Benjamin Franklin" (53). Harry's teacher, commenting on Franklin and the *Autobiography*, tells the winner of the award, "I hope you will read and profit by it, and try like him to make your life a credit to yourself and a blessing to mankind" (53). Harry, knowing little of Franklin other than that "he was a great man" (54), is elated with the gift, since the only other book he owns is *Robinson Crusoe*, not coincidentally Franklin's (and Rousseau's) favorite text.

Harry is powerfully impressed as he reads the *Autobiography*, and he finds that Franklin's life story generates and excitement and vision for life he has previously lacked. Harry observes that

Great as he afterward became, he was surprised to find that Franklin was a poor boy, and had to work for a living. He started out in life in his own account, and through industry, frugality, and perseverance, and a fixed determination to rise in life, he became a distinguished man in the end, and a wise man also, though his early opportunities were very limited. (55)

Harry then reflects on his own life.

It seemed to Harry that there was a great similarity between his own circumstances and position in life, and those of the great man about whom he was reading, and this made the biography the more fascinating. The hope came to him that, by following Franklin's example, he, too, might become a successful man. (55)

From then on Franklin's example becomes the motivating force behind Harry's actions, and as he tells his mother, there is a "chance to be somebody when I get bigger. I'm poor now, but so was Franklin. He worked hard, and tried to learn all he could. That's the way he succeeded. I'm going to do the same" (56). Though his parents have misgivings, Harry decides to set off for the city, reminding himself that "Franklin was much older than I, and he got along" (61).

Harry models his life after Franklin's in almost every regard, and even small details parallel his hero's life. Harry's first entrance into the city is "with a roll in his hand, eating an apple," similar to Franklin's famous entrance into Philadelphia with a roll under each arm. Harry begins work for a shoe manufacturer, a job he does not really enjoy but that he works at with unswerving industry and perseverance. All wages above his room and board he conscientiously saves. Exhibiting still another trait found in Franklin, Harry spends his evenings in study, voraciously reading books he borrows from the public library. Franklin, his "great exemplar," gained a reputation as a prominent scientist, statesman, patriot, and philosopher without the aid of formal schooling, and Harry hopes to do the same. Desiring to serve the community like Franklin, Harry applies for work with the town printer, not expecting to become another Franklin, but hoping to improve himself in a new job. *Bound to Rise* ends with Harry acquiring enough money to save the family farm from foreclosure.

The sequel, *Risen From the Ranks; The Story of Harry Walton's Success*, begins with Harry procuring employment with the town newspaper, the *Centreville Gazette*, where his diligent work and uncanny ability in learning the printing trade gain him the reputation of being a second Benjamin Franklin. He continues to improve himself through

reading and study, and even learns French from the tutoring of a student at the local academy. He becomes a member and later officer of the "Clonian Society," an Alger clone of Franklin's Junto, though more pretentious. The publication of some anonymously submitted newspaper articles encourages Harry, and by the end of the novel he has become an author with a considerable literary reputation. Alger here parallels Franklin's early "Silence Dogood" papers and subsequent reputation as a writer. Harry eventually becomes editor of the *Gazette*, at which point Alger stops to reflect.

I have traced in detail the steps by which Harry Walton ascended from the condition of a poor farmer's son to the influential position of editor of a weekly newspaper. I call to mind now, however, that he is no longer a boy, and his future career will be of less interest to my young readers. (317)

To further contrast Harry's lowly beginnings, Alger tells us that he is eventually elected to the New Hampshire legislature and then to a seat in the U. S. Congress, where he becomes known for his spirited public projects and works. No doubt, Harry grows old as an honored and respected statesman, similar to his youthful model.

Besides borrowing from Franklin, Alger found Dickens to be a worthy model to imitate in crafting his own fiction. The Dickensian touches filtered through Mayhew's life of Franklin resurface in Alger's novels. Like Dickens and Mayhew, Alger used his fiction for social purposes. Particularly interested in the streets boys of New York City with whom he intimately worked and lived, he felt that the public could not fully sympathize with the plight of the poor without a "knowledge of how the poorest classes lived" (*Tattered Tom*, 106). Like Dickens and Mayhew, his fiction can lapse into commentary as he encourages reform. Prefacing *The Telegraph Boy* (1879) with a call for greater assistance for the needy, Alger writes that this book

completes the series of sketches of street-life in New York inaugurated eleven years since by the publication of "Ragged Dick." the author has reason to feel gratified by the warm reception accorded by the public to these pictures of humble life in the great metropolis. He is even more gratified by the assurance that his labors have awakened a philanthropic interest in the children whose struggles and privations he has endeavored faithfully to describe. He feels it his duty to state that there is now way in which these waifs can more effectually be assisted than by contributing to

the funds of "The Children's Aid Society," whose wise and comprehensive plans for the benefit of their young wards have already been crowned with abundant success. (vii)

While his treatment of the street boys of New York is never as laborious as Mayhew's encyclopedic rendition of the jail and poorhouse in *Young Benjamin Franklin*, the philanthropic impulse evident in social novelists is apparent. This element of Victorian reform has a corollary affect on the image of Franklin as later biographers stress what they see as his philanthropic work in various community projects.

The tone and style of Alger's fiction often imitate Dickens, though never with the latter's finesse or skill, and numerous characters and situations are either borrowed from or modeled after those of his literary progenitor. Outlining some of Alger's most obvious gleanings from one of the century's most popular novelists, Scharnhorst observes that Alger often copied incidents and characters into his own fiction from four Dickens novels which feature a juvenile hero—*Great Expectations*, *David Copperfield*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and *Oliver Twist*. For example, he introduced characters modeled after such Dickens characters as Wilkins Micawber in *The Young Outlaw* (1875), Sally Brass in *Hector's Inheritance* (1883), and Smike in *Grit* (1884). The Dickens work most often imitated by Alger, however, was *Oliver Twist*, which he once described as "Dickens's immortal story." . . . No fewer than fourteen Alger juveniles employ *Oliver* twists in the plot, usually the discovery of a locket containing pictures used to identify the hero, who had been kidnaped as a baby, and to reunite him with his prosperous family. (72).

The crucial unifying thread which ties these narratives, both Alger's and Dickens', to the mythic image of Ben Franklin is the precipitous rise in fortune brought about in the lives of each of the characters. Though the method by which fortune comes differs in these varying "rags-to-riches" motifs, the almost magical ascension to prosperity serves as a common theme.

Another instance of a Dickensian borrowing in Alger has a more direct bearing on the Franklinian success myth. Clearly, taken from Dickens' Artful Dodger in *Oliver Twist*, Alger's literary heir apparent, Tom Dodger, in *Adrift in New York* (1889) inhabits the slums of New York City rather than London. Unlike The Artful Dodger, who is incapable of self-regeneration, Tom Dodger and other Algerian variations such as Ragged Dick

undergo complete transformation in the course of the novels from conniving thief or listless waif to respectable heroes. Their reclamation, however, comes only through the aid of a wealthy friend. Similar to the Mayhew's preceptorial Uncle Ben, Alger's beneficent patrons serve the same function in assisting young boys on the road to independence and respectability. But, in Alger, the role of the preceptor begins to recede. Instead of the all-wise mentor, a wealthy god-like patron (almost a "fairy godfather") provides a more romantic substitute, having a less visible role than Uncle Ben or earlier preceptors within the Rousseauian tradition. The effect serves to reinforce the Protestant ethic so evident in Mayhew, and subsequently in Alger, where help is quantified monetarily, suggesting yet another way in which juvenile literature contributes to the capitalist conception of Franklin.

Though the Alger image and success story comes to us today through distortions by early twentieth-century readers and critics (a misrepresentation Scharnhorst claims is due in part from inaccurate biographical information presented by Herbert Mayes and perpetuated by later biographers [preface]), the typical Horatio Alger hero did rise from rags to respectability, if not riches, in a Franklinesque way. Like his predecessors of both juvenile fiction and biography, Alger imbues his stories with a high sense of morality, never losing his Harvard Unitarian frame of the artist or writer as a moral and religious teacher. But modern myth-makers often overlook his stress on respectability and the "moral" use of money, though characters such as Ragged Dick remind us, "If you'll try to be somebody, and grow up into a respectable member of society, . . . you may not become rich,--it isn't everybody that becomes rich, you know,--but you can obtain a good position, and be respected" (31). More often than not, Alger's heroes obtain respectability and a modest income, not enormous fame and fortune. But the key motif of the Alger stories which has caught the public imagination, both in his own day as well as the period just prior to World War I, relates to the notion of social mobility. That a ragged urchin like Dick Hunter can rise above the squalor of New York City street life sets a standard and provides a model similar to Franklin. In many ways Alger extended the "poor boy who made good" motif to

a larger segment of the underprivileged society, and the refashioning of the Franklin figure and story, often in novel ways (like a boot black in New York City), becomes an important dimension in placing Franklin more firmly at the center of the cult of success.

A Franklin biography written towards the end of the post-Civil War period reflects the stress given to the ideology of success, analogous to the development of the "rags-to-riches" motif in Alger. John S. C. Abbott, in *Benjamin Franklin. A Picture of the Struggles of Our Infant Nation One Hundred Years Ago* (the title reflecting the representative man as nation idea), shows how the stature and importance of Franklin grows nearly to eclipse the previously undisputed great hero of colonial America, George Washington. Abbott, a popular writer of juvenile fiction, describes Franklin with an elevated heroic tone, reflecting the new capitalist image of Franklin. Additionally, he anticipates a greater emphasis on the colonial leader's "Americanness," which typifies many late century biographies as the nationalistic impulse in the United States increased. Brother to earlier Franklin biographer Jacob Abbott, John, a trained cleric, exhibited the same evangelical enthusiasm about his subject, but with more historical grounding. Abbott's *Benjamin Franklin* presents the early founding father as the ideal American, a man worthy of emulation.

Indicating that Franklin's life extended over the most eventful period of American history, during which the colonies were established, the continent developed, and the most powerful country in the world organized, Abbott observes that this colonial leader played a crucial role in America's beginnings.

Next to George Washington, we must write, upon the Catalogue of American Patriots, the name of Benjamin Franklin. He had so many virtues that there is no need of exaggerating them; so few imperfections that they need not be concealed. . . . Probably there can no where be found, within the same limits, so vivid a picture of Life in America, one hundred years ago, as the career of Franklin presents. (iii)

Abbott's biography, published in 1876 to coincide with America's centennial celebration, reflects how Franklin's patriotism and diplomatic service become more important aspects of

the narrative, and how the image itself becomes even more representative of the typical American. Abbot ends his preface asserting that there does not exist in all literature a biography entertaining and worthwhile than "a truthful sketch of the career of Benjamin Franklin" (v).

An English edition of Abbott's biography printed three years later and retitled *Benjamin Franklin, Printer's Boy, Statesman, Philosopher, and Patriot*, suggests in a revised preface the extent of Franklin's growing stature and importance, even across the Atlantic.

That development he aided by his patriotism, energy, and remarkable talents; and next to that of Washington, his is the most prominent name in the history of the United States. His homely sagacity and shrewd common sense were scarcely less admirable than his penetrating intellect when explaining the mysteries of science, and his moral courage and patriotic achievements as a diplomat. As a self-educated and self-raised man (beginning life in obscurity and rising to highest eminence), Franklin offers a grand example of what may be achieved by force of will. As a student of science, his remarkable discoveries gave him a high reputation, even among the philosophers of Europe, and his name is a household word in the frugal and happy homesteads of his native land, who quote the ever fresh and humorous sayings of "Poor Richard." His biography is a remarkable narrative, and we trust it is not unworthily told. (iii-iv)

As this preface indicates, the importance of and emphasis on Poor Richard remains, but Franklin's greatness is enhanced by his diplomatic, scientific, and philosophic work.

By this point in time little persuasive emphasis seems necessary to convince readers of Franklin's religiosity. With generally less concern over theological issues and with the effective Christianizing of earlier writers like Weems, Abbott unobtrusively integrates religious material into the text, an element completely absent from Alger's fabulization of the Franklin story. For instance, Abbott's biography begins with Ben's christening at the Old South Church in Boston the very day he is born. Born on a Sunday in a house across from the church, Franklin's father rushes him to be baptized.

The same day, the babe, whose renown it was then little imagined would subsequently fill the civilized world, was wrapped in blankets, and carried by his father across the street through the wintry air, to the Old South Church, where he was baptized by the Rev. Dr. Willard. (12-13)

Through the biography Abbott treats Franklin's Christian orientation as integral to Franklin's character, even if not always evident by his actions or stated beliefs.

As in earlier biographies, Franklin's Poor Richard-like wisdom remains a central key to his eventual success and enduring popularity. Franklin's story "The Whistle" follows the description of his christening, and Abbott comments that "this story, as published by Franklin, with his keen practical reflections, has become as a household word in all families of England and America; and has been translated into nearly all the languages of modern Europe" (14). Abbott also places less emphasis on Franklin's "errata," with the greatness of Franklin's achievements continually enlarged as his weaknesses diminish. From the beginning, Abbott describes Franklin as a nearly perfect man, possessing nearly all the redeeming virtues and characteristics found in Alger's displaced rural heroes.

From early childhood Franklin was celebrated for his physical beauty, his athletic vigor and his imperturbable good nature. His companions invariably recognized him as their natural leader. He was in no respect what would be called a religious boy, but in many things he had a high sense of honor. (14)

When Franklin complains to his father over the long mealtime prayers which "wearied the temper of of son" (18), his admonition to his father to pray over the whole storeroom to save time is seen as "evidence of an intellect of unusual acuteness" (19), though it may show a little lack of respect for religion. Even when Franklin is "without God" in his more skeptical younger years, Abbott tells us Franklin guided himself by his instincts, and "they were noble, keeping him from 'vulgar vice'" (34). By this time Franklin's character and person have become representative, the name and life of the colonial American coming to stand for abstract values and ideas. Thus, biographers tend to stress his human side less, only insofar as it shows his ability to overcome weakness in a heroic way, quite different from Alger who humanizes Ben through his fictional boys.

Abbott handily treats Franklin's initial flight from Boston by depicting the young boy as feeling justified in breaking the binding indentures because "the unjust conduct of James entitled him to violate the obligation" (41). While Franklin harbors some ill

conscience for his actions, Abbott makes no attempt to elaborate on the situation or draw a moral. Abbott summarizes Franklin's passage from Boston harbor, recounting the lie about the naughty girl in euphemistic terms, but making little of Franklin's falsehood.

He sold some of his books to pay his passage; and going on board secretly at night, he solicited the captain to aid him in concealing him, with the *false* statement that he had become involved in a love adventure with a young girl; that she had subsequently proved to be a bad character; that her friends insisted on his marrying her; and that his only refuge was to be found in flight. (41)

The "false statement" gains acceptability because the young girl had initially deceived Franklin in hiding her own questionable character, a deception aimed at apprehending a marriage partner. Thus, Franklin is absolved of any moral offense.

Abbott introduces Franklin's relationship to Collins to show further Benjamin's own high morality and, by comparison, the inferior values not only of Collins but of many professed Christians of the day. Like Thayer before him, Abbott employs the declining fortune of Collins to highlight the spectacular rise of Franklin. Similarly, there is a subtle shift of emphasis from Franklin's weaknesses to those of his friend, further absolving the former from any serious faults or errors, affixing blame when needed to others in the narrative. While Collins had been a bright and accomplished youth, he became in manhood "a reckless, dissipated spendthrift, . . . intemperate and a gambler, and was every day intoxicated" (60, 61). Franklin's kindness and generosity towards him only show the true Christian charity the former possesses, for "reduced to almost beggary, Franklin felt compelled to furnish him with money to save him from starvation" (61). Collins' morality, was perhaps not less elevated than that which the majority of imperfect professing Christians practice, was certainly below that which the religion of Jesus Christ enjoins. Had he been a true Christian according to the doctrines and precepts of Jesus, he would have escaped these accumulating sorrows. (64)

By comparison, Franklin, though himself not an "active" Christian, is certainly as worthy as one due to his impeccable values.

Abbott does admit some errors in Franklin, but usually only peccadilloes that he whitewashes or obscures. For instance, Franklin demonstrates ungentlemanly conduct towards his "affianced," Deborah Read, while in England. But he regrets it, and later writes that he would not do the same again if he had the chance. He further extenuates himself in the matter by later marrying Deborah, who had adversely affected her social and economic standing by a bad marriage. Abbott also says that one of Franklin's weaknesses during his first stay in England resulted in treating women with too much "familiarity" (80). In a surprisingly singular reference that readers could interpret to refer to Franklin's amorous affairs, Abbott qualifies the statement by admitting that "Franklin does not conceal these *foibles*, as he regarded them, these *sins* as Christianity pronounces them. He declares this simply to have been another of the great errors of his youth" (80). Though Abbott does suggest this and other weaknesses could have been avoided through fully living the "gospel" of Christ, Franklin later honestly confessed his sorrow at having given way to them. Abbott quotes Parton, in an instance where we see the earlier biographer influencing the image of the American hero depicted in juvenile reading, by saying that Franklin was too sincere and logical to ask God to help him resist something he was not fully resolved to overcome. Even in this Franklin comes out ahead for not living hypocritically.

Like many of the earlier biographers, Abbott takes a chapter to discuss *Poor Richard's Almanack*, and the great work Franklin did in promoting industry, frugality, and honesty. Abbott quotes large portions from Part Two of the *Autobiography* in a chapter describing what he sees as Franklin's "religion." He commends Franklin's scheme of perfection and wise use of time, indicating that he "was inspired undeniably by a very noble desire to be a good man, to attain a high position in morality" (126). Anticipating what Weber would do to a greater extent in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* over half a century later, Abbott discusses the representative Poor Richard traits, seen as evidence of Franklin's morality, in the context of his religion. Abbott quotes other

anecdotes and portions of Franklin's writing, ranging from such topics as his support of the Rev. Whitefield to his "Proposal Relating to Education of Youth." Following the pattern to place more emphasis on aged philosopher and statesman and his accomplishments, Abbott discusses in more depth Franklin's experiments with electricity, his involvement in the French and Indian War, his diplomatic missions to England, and his patriotic services during the Revolutionary War, anticipating the patriotic zeal which would encompass the image in the final decades of the century.

Concerned that his accounting of Franklin end on a positive note, Abbott comes back to the issue of religion. Lest he portray Franklin as too unorthodox, Abbott follows the Weemsian tradition of showing Franklin at last returning to "the sentiments of his ancestors," nicely putting him in the Puritan frame for Lawrence, Weber, and others. Quoting such miscellanies as the famous letter to Ezra Stiles, his plea with a niece to attend church, his proposal before the Constitutional Convention instigate prayer and rely upon divine power, Abbott ends with retelling Weems account of Franklin dying with his eyes affixed the picture of the crucified Christ. Varying little from Weems' original telling, Abbott has the story told by Rev. David Ritter, friend and admirer of Franklin who goes to the Franklin home just after the great American has passed away. Ritter says that Franklin was reticent ever to discuss openly his views on the resurrection, the judgment, or heaven, but that he acknowledged his dependence on God and thanked Providence for the good blessing which filled his life.

Abbott ends where he begins with the Washington comparison, giving unrestrained praise to Franklin and for the life he lived.

Washington was universally revered. Franklin was both revered and loved. It was almost the universal feeling that, next to Washington, our nation was indebted to Franklin for its Independence. Franklin occupied, in the arduous field of diplomacy, the position which Washington occupied at the head of our armies. (367)

Though Franklin stands next to Washington in greatness, each ranking foremost in the areas where they aided the cause of independence, somehow, Franklin seems to stand a

little taller or be a little more human, being both "revered and loved," again reflecting the Victorian/Dickensian touch as Franklin himself becomes the gentle benefactor to those who would follow, also suggesting the notion of disciplinary intimacy Brodhead claims became a more dominant attitude by the late nineteenth century. Indeed, concludes Abbott,

no candid and charitable reader can peruse this narrative, without the admission that Benjamin Franklin, notwithstanding his imperfections, was one of the wisest and best of all the fallen children of Adam. From his dying hour to the present day his memory has been justly cherished with reverence and affection, throughout the civilized world. And there is no fear that this verdict will ever be reversed. (372-373)

The period of the Civil War and post-Civil War served to further codify and then expand the initial refashioning of Franklin found in earlier periods. The image of Franklin as the prototypic self-made man irreversibly fuses with the Poor Richard quality of mind. Yet the stress on entrepreneurial achievement is tempered by the Victorian influence of domesticity and the introduction of the Rousseauian preceptor, first as Uncle Ben, later as the Algerian patron. Invoked by industrialists as well as religionists, Franklin could not help coming away without the sheen and gloss of both. A characteristic that appealed to these differing, at times inimical groups, was the sanctity of prosperity, whether it resulted from moral worthiness or just plain hard work. And as one critic has suggested, "Benjamin not only commended prosperity; he dramatized it" (Griswold 488), a drama various writers reenacted with their own peculiar rescripting throughout the century in general and the Civil War and post-Civil War era in particular.

With the proliferation of fictional narratives, the image of Franklin grew more abstracted. As Franklin's image conformed to a Procrustean mold like Mayhew's, other writers like Alger readily saw the usefulness of adapting Franklin's representative traits and archetypal rise in unique settings for their own purposes. As Louis Wright so aptly pointed out,

By a credible though partial perception of Benjamin Franklin's philosophy, the later nineteenth century made that great American its high priest of the religion of commercial success. But first it stripped him of his urbanity, his humor, his understanding of intellectual values, and his genuine wisdom.

An age which was fond of quoting "A Psalm of Life" to prove that "Life is real! Life is earnest!" and we must "Learn to labor and to wait," could easily interpret Franklin though one work alone, "The Way to Wealth." By a curious irony, one of the least ascetic of Americans became the scriptural authority for the least desirable of all types of asceticism, that which ended in mere material acquisition. (279)

As we trace the revisionist process into the late century, we will see how this abstracting and fictionalizing further mythicize the historical figure, so that Franklin's dimensions and accomplishments take on enormous proportions, where the full-blown, larger-than-life image becomes the norm. But it remained for the Gilded Age to refashion the historical man to fit their bourgeois philosophy, to bring the figure to its materialistic zenith.

#### Note

1. Both Franklin and Alger have been subjects of mythicizing by later generations. In many ways, Alger subsumes much of the Franklin material in his own fiction, and both become seen as advocates of industrialism and competitive capitalism under the guise of progress. Like Franklin, Alger's life story became the subject for fictive biographies, beginning with Herbert R. Mayes' *Alger: A Biography Without a Hero* (New York: Macy-Masius, 1928) which hoaxed scholars for over forty years, evident in its use as the source material on Alger in the *Dictionary of American Biography*. In a more recent biography of Alger, *Horatio Alger, Jr.* (Boston: Twayne, 1980), Gary Scharnhorst provides the most complete and accurate account of Alger's life (including his alleged homosexuality) and a fine appraisal of Alger's fiction, showing how "a nineteenth-century writer of moderately popular morality tracts whose appeal was essentially nostalgic came to be considered in the twentieth century an apologist for industrial capitalism and celebrant of mercenary values and business acumen who genuflected at the altar of the bitch-goddess Success" (preface). See also Michael Moon's "The Gentle Boy from the Dangerous Classes': Pederasty, Domesticity, and Capitalism in Horatio Alger" (*Representations* 19 (summer 1987): 87-110) for a recent discussion of Alger's identification with late nineteenth-century capitalism.

## CHAPTER 6

### LATE CENTURY (1880-1900): AMERICAN NATIONALISM AND THE SIMPLIFICATION OF TEXTS

Just as each previous period of the nineteenth century crafted the image of Benjamin Franklin to fit shifting ideologies, so the late century adapted the already refashioned figure in such a way as to bring about the complete mythicizing of the historical man. A corollary to the post-Civil War industrial and economic growth in the United States was the notion of America's "manifest destiny." Affected by an almost religious fervor centered on the rightness of America and democracy, this ideology was reflected in almost every aspect of life, from the market place to foreign policy to the writing of fiction and nonfiction. As America's fundamental ideals and greatness grew more visible, attention returned to those men involved in the creation of the United States (Franklin prominent among them), reinforcing the founding fathers as mythic heroes.

One manifestation of American nationalism during the century came in increased stress and importance placed upon patriotism, or love of country, which grew to rival the love of God as the foundation of moral character and virtue. This can be clearly seen in school readers published during the final years of the nineteenth century wherein most such contained selections on patriotism, stressing that loyalty to country must take precedence over all other loyalties, including those to friends, family, and one's own interests. Through example and exhortation, the readers attempted to convert "the untutored impulses of the child into exalted patriotism" (Moser 36, Elson 282). Most authors and readers saw America as a country especially deserving of its citizens' loyalty because of the great personal liberties which the American revolution had secured and succeeding generations had insured. The effect of this freedom had significance not only for America, but it meant

for many that all the world now had a standard to rally to, and that through God's ordination America could shed its influence on all nations.

The rhetoric of patriotism surfaced not only in readers for children, but as Rush Welter notes about antebellum campaigning, became an integral part of nineteenth-century politics as well, for "the object of any political campaign was to revive public virtue by invoking the precedent of the founding fathers" (27). This appeal to patriotism continued throughout the century, only to be heightened during the years following America's centennial celebration. Naturally, any inculcation of patriotic feeling reverted to the birth of the nation and those men who helped establish freedom and created a government which ensured God-given rights for its citizenry. Here again Franklin emerges as an exemplary model. His services to the country, both while in England and in France, made him representative of an American interested in securing freedom. With unblemished loyalty, he even remained faithful when his son, a Tory sympathizer, left America in support of Great Britain. Through the mythicizing process Franklin's political views underwent radical simplification. His complex work in England, particularly his conciliatory gestures between England and the Colonies, grew dim, becoming completely overshadowed by his figurehead status as an American diplomat and his presence at the Constitutional Convention (to which he contributed actually very little). As a model of patriotism, Franklin's image further gained a sense of sacredness and size worthy of emulation.

The increased emphasis on patriotism often surfaced in subtle ways. While the specific incidents related from Franklin's life differed very little from those of earlier accounts, the actual framing and context provided by the authors set Franklin as the typical American and, therefore, the prototypic patriot. In an 1888 anthology, *The Dawnings of Genius Exemplified and Exhibited in the Early Lives of Distinguished Men*, Rev. Theodore Alois Buckley asserts that the early lives of distinguished men generates a universal interest, and that the literary world has failed to give enough attention to the matter. In his

preface, Buckley indicates that he does not wish to write the history of "General Tom Thumb," but that he wishes

to show how greatness in the child becomes greatness in the man; and how, by a secret yet perceptible progress, some leading bent of inclination discloses itself, even when the tender years of a child would preclude the belief in its power of deliberate choice. (2)

The preface mirrors the increased attention given to children and childhood through the latter part of the nineteenth century. In his introductory remarks about Franklin, Buckley stresses Franklin's service to his country and benefit to mankind, suggesting that the seeds of these attributes appear in Franklin's early years.

Buckley begins his selection on Franklin with a stress on the patriot's service to his country, one of the ways he benefited his own nation as well as the countries of the world.

Whether we estimate the value of an individual's services to his country by his social activity, or to the progress of the human mind by mental application; or whether we consider every man to benefit the community most by reforming himself, it cannot fail to strike us that BENJAMIN FRANKLIN is one of the men who, in one or other of these ways, has done much good for society and for all time. (351)

Buckley suggests that Franklin's hard work was indeed a benefit to America, and from the larger perspective, "good for society and for all time." Clearly, the importance and impact of his life's work continues to rank high. Buckley shows Franklin's life and the characteristics he develops as distinctly American: "No man has probably so completely identified himself *with his nation*, a nation of hard-working, erring, and yet noble men--as the Americans of his day were--than Benjamin Franklin" (353, emphasis added).

Buckley then summarizes the traditionally recounted events of Franklin's early years: the stone wharf incident, the learning to write by imitating the *Spectator*, and the early apprenticeship with his brother, James. Doing little other than sketching Franklin's life to demonstrate how he became representative of America in general and a distinguished man in particular, Buckley eliminates any of the more troublesome passages referred to in the *Autobiography*. For instance, in discussing Ben's difficulties with James and his subsequent flight from Boston, Buckley says, "whatever injustice there may have been on

either side, too much unpleasantness had arisen between the brothers to admit of their continuing together. Secretly, therefore, and by a subterfuge, the young lad departed for New York" (362). In the characteristic manner, Buckley shows Franklin set up in a successful printing trade.

A revealing comment Buckley makes in reference to Keimer, Ben's initial employer and later rival, suggests the growing association between Franklin and American capitalism. Referring to Keimer's attitude toward his former employee, Buckley notes the strident feeling created through competition and the clear superiority of the younger printer: "But Keimer's jealousy was again excited by this universality of talent; he perceived a rival of no uncommon powers, whose simple habits saved him money" (368). Of course Franklin, the better worker and more frugal tradesmen, makes his fortune while Keimer, bankrupt and ruined, moves to Barbados and dies a broken and penniless man. By the end of the the Gilded Age nothing could be more typical of an American than a successful capitalist.

Buckley then summarizes many of Franklin's later accomplishments, all possible because of the means he secured as a thriving businessman. We also see the sanitized religious element of the image entering in, though the overt theological rhetoric has all but disappeared. After Buckley has shown Ben becoming a successful printer, he moves on to speak more especially of his religious views. After listing the thirteen virtues from the plan of moral perfection, Buckley stresses Franklin's love of truth, sincerity, and integrity as the guiding forces in Franklin's life and evidence of his religious faith.

One intriguing inclusion in Buckley's account comes in a short discussion of Franklin's wife, Deborah. Seldom do authors even mention Franklin's wife, other than a cursory reference to the "coincidence" of their encounter on his first entry into Philadelphia. Placing her in the Victorian frame of the angelic woman of the home, Buckley also shows her supporting Franklin in matters of management.

In 1730, he married his old love, Miss Read, who had seen him when he came into Philadelphia, munching the three memorable rolls. With her he led a happy life, for in addition to her kind affectionate heart, she possessed qualities which render a home attractive. Frugality, prudence, quick execution, noiseless activity, these distinguished her, and she had many virtues and graces besides. (372)

For Buckley, the ideal woman, like children, should be seen and not heard (involved in "noiseless activity"), and she should save, avoiding all extravagance. Certainly, Deborah conforms to the late nineteenth-century Victorian ideal of a woman, particularly her "kind affectionate heart" and her many "virtues and graces besides." With the advent of ruthless competition in the marketplace, the home and family became seen as a refuge where a man could enjoy warmth and intimacy, and for Buckley, Franklin's home and familial relationships conformed to the idealized norm.

To show how integral this colonial leader had become to America and its institutions, Buckley recounts the many offices Franklin held and lists the societies and organizations he began. Franklin demonstrates the system of representation, what would become American democracy, by his active involvement in the Pennsylvania assembly and later by representing the cause of the colonies in England. As organizations such as volunteer fire departments and public lending libraries grew to be a standard part of many communities--reflecting the spirit of cooperation and the emphasis on learning and education--authors like Buckley tie these to the wisdom and foresight of Philadelphia's most famous printer. Also, with the advent of more technological advancements and inventions during the concluding years of the nineteenth century, we see a stress on the scientific work continue. Buckley reminds us of Franklin's many experiments with electricity and the various theories he proposed, suggesting that the modern understanding of this science and its practical application come from this early work. The crowning achievement of Franklin's work, after the useful invention of the lightning rod, comes with the famous kite experiment, an incident which becomes increasingly popular to tell. Always at the point of utter despair does lightning strike, establishing the certainty of lightning's electrical nature.

Buckley concludes with an attempt to tie in the various ideologies by a final summation.

We have now followed the life of Benjamin Franklin through all its earliest struggles; we have seen his destitution, we have watched his gradual rise; we have beheld his confidence in God unshaken, his early trials only consolidating and confirming his trust in the Almighty Being who watches over us, and orders everything for the best. It is not within the scope of this work to pursue farther his career; enough to say, that his later life only bore out the promise that his striving youth offered. . . . He separated himself so little from his age [and country], that he has been called the representative of materialism; and yet when he thought on religion, is mind passed beyond reliance on sects to faith in God. (375, 377-378)

Indeed, Franklin serves not only as the self-made capitalist, but represents the upright, religious believer who works hard for the benefit of himself and others. Mentioning also his model's religious heritage, Buckley ends with with an assertion of the great morality and benevolence represented in the story just presented, leading qualities of the ideology of Victorian success, as material achievement continues to be stressed from the previous period, later to be integrated with the new emphasis on patriotism.

A turn of the century anthology, *True Stories of Famous Men and Women* (1898), which chronicles the lives of historical men and women, places Franklin also in the context of American greatness, reflective of the prevalent spirit of nationalism. In prefatory remarks indicating the anthology's focus on famous American individuals, the editors compare Eastern and Western greatness. The preface recounts how Mohammed's tomb is ornamented with over eleven million dollars worth of precious stones. In America, however, "more helpful shrines" exist, the lives of heroic men and women who, as "gems of character," provide a model of others to follow (5). Continuing, the preface reminds us that nothing is more potent in its influence for good than the example of great leaders, and that we cannot overestimate the power of lives like Washington's and Franklin's. Demonstrating how the historical individual had become representative of abstract values and ideas, the preface concludes, "Every one of these great names stands for something. Washington represents truthfulness and integrity, in Franklin, industry, and devotion to

duty, with statesmanship and diplomacy" (6-7). By this time the image of the frugal, hard-working printer has assumed the greater weight of the later statesman and diplomat, creating an even more mythic "typical" American.

The selection, "Benjamin Franklin, The Inventor, Philosopher, and Statesman," indicates by its title the multifaceted dimension into which the historical figure's image had evolved. Beginning with a quote from one of Franklin's previous biographers, James Parton, this sketch suggests that Franklin has endured as one of America's leading "gems," whose life and memory can provide great help to all who will apply the principles that made him famous.

No one ever started from a lower point than the poor apprentice of Boston; no one ever raised himself higher by his own unaided forces than the inventor of the lightning rod. Better than the biographies of Plutarch, this life, so long and so well filled, is a source of perpetual instruction to all men. Everyone can there find counsel and example. (43)

The suggestion remains that America is a land where even the lowly and poor can succeed, as opposed to the old world where birth and privilege are important. Franklin as the model American has shown the way, his life and words providing apt counsel for all.

In this account of Franklin, the anonymous author generally follows the chronology of the *Autobiography* in telling of his great rise to fortune, though any less-than-virtuous references found in the *Autobiography* are eliminated. After Benjamin's initial training in his brother's printing business, we are told, "James conceived a jealousy of his younger brother, which led to their separation" (44). Subsequently, "as he could get no employment in Boston, [Benjamin] obtained a passage to New York, whence he was recommended to go to Philadelphia, which he reached after a very troublesome journey" (44). Sections of the *Autobiography* are included in the account, such as the mythic entrance into Philadelphia and the Franklin's industry in establishing himself as a successful printer, carrying loads of newsprint through the streets in a wheelbarrow. We do have a two sentence reference to Franklin's marriage. Though not developed, the inclusion suggests the significance proper marriage seems to have gained in the model of

the successful man: "The marriage was a happy one. Industry and frugality reigned in the household of the young printer" (47).

Franklin's activity in organizing the Junto, his work in various city projects such as the city fire services and hospital as well as the lending library are all discussed as examples of "public service." Even the publication of *Poor Richard's Almanack* here is construed as an act of community and national beneficence. Characteristic of the support a late nineteenth-century Carnegie gave worthwhile projects, Franklin appears, in part, as the originator or at least earliest model of such civic service, demonstrated as a characteristic American phenomenon. Carnegie himself saw this connection when writing about the need to render community assistance, observing that "Franklin was right when he proclaimed that 'The highest worship of God is service to man'" (120). We see Franklin depicted playing a major role in repealing the Stamp Act, appearing every much as zealous as a Sam Adams, Thomas Paine, or Patrick Henry. The intricacies of Franklin's diplomatic work in England and his changing views concerning the possibility of reconciliation are eliminated, primarily to show this founding father as a leader of independence and, consequently, freedom and democracy.

A striking mixture of economics, nationalism, and religion concludes this short biographical sketch. Franklin, we are told, "always advocated freedom of commerce, even in time of war. He was of the opinion that the merchant, the agriculturist, and the fisherman were benefactors to mankind" (54). Two pages of "evidence" as to Franklin's Christianity (letters asserting his belief in and support of religion) immediately follows this plug for competitive capitalism, as the author seems to suggest that a good American is a believing Christian who supports free enterprise.

The nationalistic fervor of the era surfaces in yearly publications like *The Young American Annual* (1890), which is described on its title page as "A book of histories, adventures, stories, anecdotes and incidents, *mainly American in character*, for the young folks" (emphasis added). The selection "Benjamin Franklin" by H. W. Thomas begins by

indicating that Carlyle demonstrated great men make an age, and of "the great lives that came forth out of the exciting and trying scenes of our own country in the last century, no one, perhaps, is more strikingly characteristic than that of Benjamin Franklin" (426). Thomas stresses the "characteristic" American qualities of Franklin's life--his hard work, frugality, self-education, and inventiveness--by highlighting select passages from the *Autobiography*. For instance, young Benjamin works with great diligence at the printing trade with his brother James, and at night spent many hours reading and studying to improve his penmanship and composition. The compelling reason for his leaving Boston came from an ambition aroused by the printing trade, an ambition which remained unfulfilled under his brother's stifling management. Thus, at seventeen, "he ran away, taking passage in a sloop to New York; and soon found his way to Philadelphia" (426). Thomas makes no mention of breaking indentures or secretly boarding the sloop under the guise of a provocative lie.

We find Franklin set up as a printer in Philadelphia, and Thomas attributes practicality and common sense as two of the chief reasons for success, for "as a young man, Franklin was not only active and ambitious, but he was blessed with a large amount of eminently practical good sense" (426). His "sense" later leads him to coax lightning down a kite string, which in turn resulted in a host of practical applications--"from this simple experiment, the Morses and the Edisons have gone on in improvement, till now this same electric fluid lights our houses and streets and carries messages across continents and seas" (426)--tying in Franklin with later famous American inventors. Franklin's "practical mind" is further demonstrated by his organizing a subscription library, publishing *Poor Richard's Almanack* (with its pages full of "common-sense maxims and proverbs for the poor and laboring people" [426]), initiating a local fire fighting department and militia in Philadelphia, promoting a plan for union of the colonies (anticipating the Constitution), establishing the foundation for what would become the University of Pennsylvania, and

organizing the most efficient postal delivery system then in existence. So great was his wisdom and ingenuity that

this poor boy who began life making candles and setting type, and eating his dry bread upon the streets of Philadelphia, at last stood before the royal and learned of England and the continents; and was admired and praised for his great knowledge, and loved for his simple honesty and goodness. (421)

Thomas then summarizes numerous diplomatic matters which involved Franklin through the years preceding, during, and following the Revolution. Referring to an apocryphal anecdote where Franklin discusses a portrait of Washington and claims the sun in the background is rising not setting, Thomas shows the prophetic destiny of America and its early leader, who "predicted the sun of his country should 'be a rising and not a setting sun'; a prophecy that has been more than verified in a hundred years of unequaled prosperity" (9). Upon Franklin's death, mourners gave praise and printed eulogies on the life and accomplishments of this great leader, and selected quotes from these, used as testimonials to Franklin's greatness, follow. In turn, we read of America's parallel greatness, as Thomas reminds us that

no country in the world offers such opportunities for the growth of the young in all the elements of greatness and power as does our own great and free America

.... [T]his land is rich in the sacred memories of her noble dead; of her illustrious statesmen and patriots, whose deeds should be a perpetual inspiration upon all the rising generations of the future. (427)

The article's conclusion resembles a book of anecdotes as an array of miscellanea appears in a subsection, "Stories and Incidents of Franklin." Most of the selected anecdotes or excerpted letters tend to show Franklin in the light of the famous, sensible American, reinforcing the superiority of the United States. For instance, two stories about Franklin in France show the contrast between artificial European aristocracy and the simple, natural American republican. In both "Franklin and the Wig" and "The Blue Yarn Stockings," exceptions to courtly etiquette are permitted for America's ambassador. In the former, Franklin, called to see the king, cannot find a wig big enough to fit his large head (presumably its size resulting from his enormous American intellect and sense), and

receives permission from that time on to see the king without the customary costumes. Similarly, in the latter story, Franklin refuses to wear silk stockings, for his common sense tells him they would be dangerous to wear given the coldness of the season. Instead, he prefers simple blue yarn stockings (representative of America's naturalness and simplicity), and in so doing he demonstrates that "great genius, like true beauty, 'needs not the foreign aid of ornament'" (428). So dazzled is the French court, including the king, by Franklin's genius they do not even notice his lack of silk stockings.

Other stories such as "The Whistle," "The Silver Hook," or "The First Prayer in Congress" (his motion to institute prayer in the Constitutional Convention) serve to show what Thomas has now established as typically American virtues and faith. The most striking inclusion in the array of stories printed is entitled "A Famous Letter to Franklin," which serves to show the degree of fame he achieved, and by inference the values and traits the historical figure had come to represent. While in England Franklin is said to have become friends with Samuel Johnson, continuing the relationship through correspondence in later years. Forgetting the address of his English acquaintance, Franklin wrote on the envelope, "Samuel Johnson, Great Britain," which, because of that man's fame, was able to be delivered to Johnson. Not to be outdone, a return letter bore the inscription, "Benjamin Franklin, The World," which found its way to the Philadelphian's home.

Franklin, from being poor and unknown when a barefoot boy in Boston, had become so famous in the great world that a letter without the name of either city or country on it would reach him without delay. (431)

Through such anecdotes, Thomas demonstrates Franklin's undisputable greatness in America and throughout the world.

The following year's edition of *The Young American Annual* also includes a selection on Franklin. To show his influence upon America's youth, the 1891 annual prints the notes of a young girl's reflections on this early American. In a note prefacing, "Incidents in the Life of Benjamin Franklin, the editor tells us "Miss Kate B. Langstroth, sixteen years of age, a member of the National Young Folks' Reading Circle, has written

for me the following notes, which will be read with interest by other young readers" (383). Langstroth retells the basic story of the *Autobiography*, simplifying and whitewashing the narrative where needed. Franklin leaves Boston because "he was always quarreling with his brother. . . . He went to New York, hoping to get work" (383, 384). Since "Franklin's services as a statesman are unnumbered" (484), a list of offices and accomplishments in Europe follow the main events of Part One of the *Autobiography*. "And thus he served his country until his death, in 1790" (485), observes Langstroth, who concludes with the following tribute:

His wisdom was not what might be learned in books. Nobody could have taught him the many wise things which he said in "Poor Richard's Almanac."

Franklin's life teaches us--

To make the most of our advantages.  
To persevere even when everything seems to be against us.  
Not to seek for glory, as it is sure to follow successful efforts.  
How much we can accomplish by perseverance and industry. (386)

Whether or not Langstroth became rich or famous by following Franklin's example remains inconsequential. The significance of her account lies in the demonstration of how she fully appropriates the image and story of Franklin put forth by the earlier writers of the century. Her view of the man corresponds precisely with the image put forth in the periodical and biographical literature she would have read at school and home.

With the undisputed preeminence of Franklin as an American hero and his importance as the leading figure in American biography between 1860 and 1890 (Miles 139), it is little surprise that given the values he had come to represent--and the accepted "Americanness" of them--that this Philadelphia printer should surpass, in the minds of some, even Washington in deference given him. As Charles Henry Hart asserts in an 1890 article appearing in *The Century*, "now that he has been at rest these hundred years he stands forth on the page of history as the first American--not even second to Washington himself" (197). Though this sentiment varied in degree and the means as to which authors

arrived at this conclusion, Franklin did stand as the most famous representative American. Elbridge Streeter Brooks, popular author of children's books and of the most mythic turn-of-the century biography on Franklin, *The True Story of Benjamin Franklin* (1898), suggests the sentiment which guided his biography in a short anthologized selection found in *Historic Americans [:] Sketches of the Lives and Characters of Certain Famous Americans Held Most in Reverence by the Boys and Girls of America, for Whom Their Stories Are Here Told* ((1897). His chapter, "The Story of Benjamin Franklin, of Philadelphia, Called by All Europe 'Le Grand Franklin,'" reflects the elevated status of he who Brooks calls the architect of democracy and greatest of all Americans (Buxbaum 235). The extent of Brooks' mythicizing and the manner in which he refashioned the existing image--discussed more fully in the following chapter--testifies of Franklin's importance and representativeness.

The connection with Washington, whether equaling or surpassing his position in the minds and hearts of his countryman, appears with greater frequency during this final period of the nineteenth century. The renewed interest in and, in many instances, deifying of these colonial leaders further demonstrates the nationalistic impulse and the pride taken in America, its leaders, and the values seen as typifying the country itself. Appearing in the February 1894 children's periodical, *St. Nicholas*, an article by Brander Matthews, a celebrated professor of literature at Columbia, shows both the patriotic fervor of the time, and the reverence paid to America's early leaders. An advocate of teaching American literature in college classrooms despite the resistance of scholars, Matthews' clear nationalist bias surfaces most evidently in this juvenile article. A preface Matthews wrote for an American literature textbook indicates his endorsement of and pride in a cultural nationalism.

[A]s literature is a reflection and a reproduction of the life of the peoples speaking the language in which it is written, this literature is likely to be strong and great in proportion as the peoples who speak the language are strong and great. English literature is therefore likely to grow, as it is the

record of the life of the English speaking race and as this race is steadily spreading abroad over the globe (qtd. in Graff 71)

In "Benjamin Franklin," Matthews identifies this nationalism as distinctly American, as he initially provides as much history of the United States as he does information about Franklin, and then parallels the greatness of the country with one of its foremost founders.

The article begins describing the state of the colonies at Benjamin's birth, how ten colonies increased to thirteen, how they strengthened themselves and fought for independence, how they continued to settle, expand, and increase in resources and importance up until the present time. After extolling the greatness of America, Matthews then turns to the man he sees as most instrumental in creating and promoting this prominence.

And in the bringing about this growth, this union, this independence, this development, the share of Benjamin Franklin was greater than the share of any other man.

With Washington, Franklin divided the honor of being the American who had the most fame abroad and most veneration at home. (316)

While he does not want to diminish the place of Washington, Matthews sees Franklin as the most significant force in colonial history, for

not only had he helped to make the nation --he had done more than any one else to form the individual. If the typical American is shrewd, industrious, and thrifty, it is due in great measure to the counsel and to the example of Benjamin Franklin. In "Poor Richard's Almanac" he summed up wisely, and he set forth sharply, the rules of conduct on which Americans have trained themselves for now a century and a half. Upon his countrymen the influence of Franklin's preaching and of his practice was wide, deep, and abiding. He was the first great American, --for Washington was twenty-six years younger. (316)

Here Matthews suggests that those traits which have become seen as distinctly American--industry and frugality in particular--have resulted primarily because of the wisdom imparted through *Poor Richard's Almanack*. Not only did Franklin preach the virtues which made the United States great, he lived by them and became the model for others to follow. According to Matthews, the power of his example continues, and because of this influence and as well as the fact that he was twenty-six years Washington's senior, he stands as the "first great American."

The narrative that follows this auspicious introduction then serves to further the notion of Franklin's representativeness, with particular emphasis given to the traits viewed as distinctly American. Since it would seem dishonorable to have the model American involved in any illegality or dishonesty, the potentially questionable "errata" of Franklin's early years are glossed over. Matthews tells us the departure from Boston was precipitated because

the elder brother treated the younger with increasing harshness, giving an aversion to arbitrary power which struck to him through life. At length the boy could bear it no longer, and he left his brother's shop. James was able to prevent him from getting work elsewhere, so Benjamin slipped off on a sloop to New York. Failing of employment there, he went on to Philadelphia. (317)

Pursuing a line of reasoning used earlier, later biographers cast the more troubling aspects of Franklin's story in a more favorable light, as in this instance with the indentures, which becomes merely a question of submitting to arbitrary power or seeking freedom. Obviously, "true" Americans would value liberty and would do all in their power to resist tyranny in any form.

Other incidents from Benjamin's early years follow the *Autobiography* quite closely, with the next lengthy authorial insertion coming with a discussion of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. The publication of the almanac "first made Franklin famous, and it was out of the mouth of Poor Richard that Franklin spoke most effectively to his fellow-countrymen" (318). For many, he never spoke with any other voice. Matthews indicates that the *Poor Richard's Almanack* was the only book many colonists had, other than the Bible, so Franklin filled it with

proverbial sentences, chiefly such as inculcated industry and frugality as the means of procuring wealth, and thereby securing virtue, it being more difficult for a man in want to act always honestly, as, to use here one of the proverbs, "It is hard for an empty sack to stand upright." (318)

We see the subtle connecting of the Protestant ethic's morality imbued with materialism, with the amalgamation viewed as inherently American. Wealth continues to reflect virtue, and America as a prosperous nation can be nothing other than virtuous. Because of its

enduring ability to promote these values in generations of readers, *Poor Richard's Almanack* is "without question . . . what it has been called--'the most famous piece of literature the Colonies produced'" (318).

While the stress remains on those values promoted by Poor Richard, even these take on the cast of Victorian benevolence as Matthews ties them to Franklin's public service: "No man had ever preached a doctrine more skillfully showed how to get the best for yourself; and no man ever showed himself more ready than Franklin to do things for others" (318). Matthews then lists Franklin's inventions which have benefited the world (such things as the lightning rod, bifocals, and daylight savings time), as well as the offices he held in public service and the diplomatic roles he fulfilled during the war. Even his presence at the Constitutional Convention becomes crucial for the freedoms enjoyed in the late nineteenth century, for the Constitution likely would have failed ratification had not Franklin been there: for "when the Constitutional Convention met, Franklin was made a member that, in the possible absence of George Washington, there might be someone whom all could agree in calling to the chair" (321). Moreover, the final speech he delivered where he pled for unity, harmony, and ratification did more than any other single thing in ensuring the acceptance of the Constitution.

Matthews then attempts to show Franklin's relevance to the late nineteenth century and how he transcends the colonial era from which he came.

In many ways Franklin was the most remarkable man who came to maturity while the United States were yet British colonies; and nothing, perhaps, was more remarkable about him than the fact that he was never "colonial" in his attitude. (321)

Suggesting that Franklin remained progressive in his thinking and actions would indicate his relevance to current situations, reflecting Matthews' professionally based elitism which elevates America's foremost patriot to his own sophisticated level. With succeeding generations often seeing themselves as more advanced than previous ones, it is high praise to say that this early American leader never suffered from a "colonial" outlook. Matthews

also associates Franklin with a nineteenth-century hero, Abraham Lincoln, demonstrating further the "greatness by association and resemblance" attitude. Franklin was not only firm, dignified, and shrewd, but good-humored. "Humor, indeed, he had so abundantly that it was almost a failing; like Abraham Lincoln, another typical American, he never shrank from a jest" (321). While Matthews makes little of the comparison, the association serves as added testimony of Franklin's greatness, Lincoln being the most revered leader to emerge in the last half of the nineteenth century, another common man who rose from poverty to power and fame.

In a final attempt to remove any doubt as to Franklin's unquestionable preeminence as the foremost American, Matthews provides two comparative "greatness by elimination" exercises to prove his point. First, he reminds us the great work done during colonial American history in establishing the country and securing liberty. Franklin "put all at the stake in his country's service. He was the only American who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Peace, and the Constitution" (323). With Franklin having been involved in the events leading up to each of these milestones in American democracy and being the only one to sign all three, the implication is that more signatures means greater importance: Franklin is the greatest for he alone signed all three. In the second instance, Matthews talks of different series of biographies written about great men, arriving at a similar conclusion as with the signing of the three important colonial documents.

There is an admirable series in the course of publication containing the lives of American men of letters, and there is an equally admirable series containing the lives of American statesmen. In each of these collections there is a volume devoted to Benjamin Franklin; and if there were also a series of American scientific men, the story of Franklin's life would need to be told anew for that also. No other American could make good his claim to be included even in two of these three collections. (323)

This would suggest that Franklin is not only better since more has been written about him, but also that his greatness lies in his versatility, as the multifaceted or "many-sided" man.

In conclusion, Matthews makes a final attempt at connecting industry and frugality with patriotism, emphasizing Franklin as an exemplar of both and commanding the same to his readers. Speaking of Franklin's life and writings, Matthews says,

He taught his fellow-countrymen to be masters of the frugal virtues. He taught them to attain to self-support that they might be capable of self-sacrifice. He taught them not to look to the government for help, but to stand ready always to help the government if needs be. (323)

Matthew implies that current readers likewise should cultivate these habits and attitudes and remain willing to demonstrate their patriotism by helping and supporting the government in any need.

With this increased interest in nationalism, even those works where authors stress Franklin's work, frugality, or other traits emphasize his Americanness or the way he aided his country. In a book published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, *Perseverance Under Difficulties, As Shown in the Lives of Great Men*, the forty-two page entry on Franklin focuses on Franklin's self-education and industry, but in the opening paragraph these are tied to his public and national service.

Benjamin Franklin is, perhaps, one of the most striking instances, not only of a self-educated man, but a man raising himself entirely by his own exertions from poverty and obscurity to wealth and fame. Yet wealth and fame could hardly have been the chief objects of his ambition through his life, the greater part of which was spent in serving his country and in promoting the good of his fellow-creatures. (77-78)

Through the qualities the reader sees Franklin develop--energy, perseverance, self-control, and faith--the anonymous author reminds us that such traits enabled him "to accomplish those many and great services to his country which his benevolence, humanity, and goodness of heart, ever prompted him to undertake" (119).

In two short filler pieces for late century juvenile periodicals, Franklin's nationality plays a conspicuous role in the context of the points made. In the July 31, 1888, issue of *Harper's Young People*, an article, "The Two Great Franklins," tells of a boy named Franklin West who is reminded by an uncle of the heritage in his name, of a great American and Englishman who bore that name. Brief events from the lives of Benjamin Franklin and

Sir John Franklin, English explorer, follow. Through his efforts, the farmer (Ben) rose to great position so that he could be of service to his country.

Thus, simply by his own exertions, [he] raised himself from one of the humblest positions to such an exalted station of life that his society was sought and prized by kings, queens, and other leading personages of the world. (693)

A December 6, 1882, issue of *The Boy's Own Annual*, contains a short anecdote about Franklin obtaining work as a printer during his first trip to England, stressing his Americanness. As the British workers wonder if "any good can come from America?" Young Benjamin demonstrates his skill in setting type with such speed and precision that the owner hires him on the spot. Of course he chooses to set in type the scriptural question, "Can any good come of Nazareth?" which properly rebukes the skeptical workers. A March 1882 issue of *The Young Standard Bearer* contains the same anecdote, beginning with the statement, "Benjamin Franklin was a poor American boy, who raised himself by industry and temperance to be one of the greatest men of whom his country is proud" (39). Inevitably, even short incidental pieces like these mention Franklin's nationality, often stressing his service and loyalty to country.

A title of a short article in the July 1898 issue of *St. Nicholas* suggests the connection between Franklin and the democratic values of America. Entitled, "A Great Republican at Court," the article written by H. A. Ogden tells of Franklin's work in France from 1776-1785. With the greatness of America's ambassador taken for granted, Ogden begins with the elevated appellation, doctor.

When Dr. Benjamin Franklin stood before the monarch of France in 1778, it must have seemed to him the exact fulfillment of a prophecy; for it is said that, when a poor little boy, his father used to repeat to him Solomon's proverb: "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings." (774)

Ogden continues that after Franklin signed the Declaration of Independence, demonstrating his love of liberty, Congress sent him to France to "enlist their aid in our struggle for freedom" (774). Of course "their choice fell on their ablest and most patriotic member--

upon him who had been one of the originators of the Declaration. . . " (774). While Ogden notes Franklin's many accomplishments--"his fame as a printer, editor, inventor, philosopher, and statesman (for the old gentleman was a many-sided genius), was well established" (774)--the stress remains on his unswerving commitment to liberty--"he remained the simple-minded, plain republican, ever keeping in mind his country's trials and her need" (775). Various incidents from his life and work in France follow, his securing financial support, his wearing a fur hat in Paris, and his wearing a crown of laurel bestowed upon him at a courtly ball. Ogden concludes with Jefferson's comments as second ambassador to France. Jefferson is reported to have said that he would succeed Franklin, but "no one can *replace* him" (779). To Ogden Franklin served an indispensable role in securing American liberty, and consequently stands as one of America's greatest citizens.

As versions of his life and subsequent variations of his image were refashioned to fit various ideologies, the tendency grew to idealize Franklin, especially in those versions intended for young children. This tendency to conceive the early patriot as a standard of perfection and excellence grows increasingly evident towards the end of the century with the fairy-tale quality of many narratives. Four accounts written between 1888 and 1894 reflect the manner authors chose to simplify the narrative and the oftentimes condescending, story-like tone and style which resulted. The stress continues to place Franklin in the context of a statesman and patriot, though the emphasis on the industrious, frugal qualities of his character never diminishes. Sarah Knowles Bolton in a short biographical sketch found in *Famous American Statesmen* (1888) gives an idealized account of Ben's younger years. The preface to this volume links the trait of industry with patriotism, a connection we have begun already to see with other accounts of Franklin. The lives of the famous men chronicled show that "the genius of success is still the genius of labor. They teach patriotism--a deeper love for and devotion to America. They teach that life, with some definite and noble purpose, is worth living" (v).

Bolton briefly sketches the events of the *Autobiography* in as uncomplicated a manner as possible. Describing Benjamin's work in his father's shop, she observes, "For two years he worked there, but how he hated it! not all labor, for he was always industrious, but soap and candle-making were utterly distasteful to him" (39). Bolton demonstrates the young boy's frugality by relating how he ate simply while apprenticed to and boarding with his brother James. To save money, he "attempted living on potatoes, hasty pudding, and rice; doing his own cooking, --not the life most boys of sixteen would choose" (41). She relates the issue of James' imprisonment to a question of freedom of the press, and shows Franklin staunchly supporting his brother's right to print what he pleases. The decision to leave Boston comes because of difficulties which arise between the brothers, and he finds that "the position . . . became irksome, for the passionate brother beat Benjamin, till at last he determined to run away" (43). Since James made it impossible for him to obtain work with other printers in town, he "said good-bye to his beloved Boston, and went out into the world to more poverty and struggle" (43).

Bolton recounts the primary events of his entrance into and early work in Philadelphia and his first trip to England, but adds a unique twist in explaining the reason he returned to America. It was the "cords of love" (46)--his feeling for Deborah Read--which impelled him to accept a clerking job and take the three month voyage back across the Atlantic. Since Franklin's character cannot be blemished, even the implication of having led on or perhaps jilted Deborah is expunged from the account. Bolton places the forgetfulness or unfaithfulness upon Benjamin's future wife: "Alas! Deborah Read, persuaded by her mother and other relatives, had married, but was far from happy" (46-47). Later, after he establishes himself in the printing business, the two renew their acquaintance: "She was lonely and desolate, and Franklin rightly felt that he could brighten her heart" (49). Like the redeeming prince, Benjamin rescues the unfortunate Deborah, and the two marry and "lived happily" (49) for forty years.

With the main narrative concluded, Bolton randomly lists other accomplishments and activities that occupied the mature man. She sees the value of *Poor Richard's Almanack* in "conveying instruction among common people, who bought scarcely any other book" (50) and quotes numerous maxims as an indication of his wisdom. As proof of Franklin's patriotism, reinforcing the intent of the preface, Franklin's diplomatic services receive some attention. With the passage of the Stamp Act, Bolton says, "at once, the American heart rebelled" (59). And after the Revolution began even at his advanced age, Franklin willing went to France, "ready for the great work before him. He loved peace" (61). Upon returning to America after years of service to his country, Franklin finally dies: "The time for the final farewell came, April 17, 1790, near midnight, when the gentle and great statesman, doubly great because so gentle, slept in death" (65). Described in almost saint-like terms--"tolerant with all religions, sweet-tempered, with remarkable tact and genuine kindness, honest, and above jealousy" (66)--Franklin emerges as America's idealized citizen.

Two other selections in anthologies of famous Americans reflect the multidimensional quality of Franklin's life which authors had begun capitalizing on, with continued emphasis on Franklin as an American. Clara L. Matéaux in "BENJAMIN FRANKLIN -- Printer and Governor, 'Poor Richard,'" a brief sketch included in the 1890 volume of *Noble Lives and Brave Deeds*, relates her story almost like a bedtime tale, the title suggesting some of the key characteristics she plans to stress. Beginning in *medias res*, we see Benjamin tiring of the work of a tallow chandler.

Benjamin had had enough of cutting wicks and filling tallow molds. He had done it for a whole two years, and now here he was a big boy of twelve, devoted to books--not that he had a chance of much reading--and with a pretty turn for ballad-writing, which, however, his father in no wise encouraged; for he said that verse-makers were not much better than beggars, and Benjamin meant to be something better than that, anyway. (27)

Matéaux condenses segments of Franklin's early life, continually interjecting such phrases, as her title would foreshadow, "Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that's

the stuff life's made of --Poor Richard" (27), adding that her young hero did not "squander time" (27).

In a characteristic simplistic manner, Matéaux provides only a thin narrative line to move into Benjamin's later years. His apprenticeship to James, his fleeing Boston, and his initial establishment in Philadelphia take but a paragraph.

Yet in time--how it happened I know not--the two brothers quarreled, and Benjamin all unable to get work, and feeling himself misunderstood and wronged, sold his little library for what he could, and away he went, literally to seek his fortune. It was hard finding, though; and when at last arrived, weary and worn, at Philadelphia, three hundred miles from home, he seemed as far from it as ever; but he was not disheartened. (29)

Benjamin quickly finds a job and begins to find success, for "a clever worker had no need to perambulate the streets for long" (29).

Matéaux stresses Franklin's sobriety as she compares the "Water American" with the less temperate workers he found while living in London. He has a marked influence upon them until he can to return to his "ain countrie" (30). A brief discussion of *Poor Richard's Almanack* follows his return to America, with selected maxims included in the sketch. Suggesting the inseparable fusion of the two, Matéaux writes "Richard was no other than our Benjamin" (30). Brief mention is made of the Revolutionary war, and the story concludes, emphasizing Franklin's patriotism:

When Washington was serving his country at home, Franklin was helping her cause abroad, and finding there was no chance of obtaining America's independence except by fighting for it, he went to France and obtained assistance. (31)

Matéaux ends with Franklin's epitaph, which she sees as evidence of his cleverness and religious belief. The article focuses primarily upon the early years up to the almanac writing, with references to the Revolution and even the epitaph suggesting Franklin lived "happily ever after."

Adapting his brief sketch in the anthology *True Stories of Famous Men and Women of America for Young People* for very young children, Elbridge Streeter Brooks takes another opportunity, as he did in other articles and in his full length biography, to put forth

Franklin as the greatest American. The preface to the anthology suggests the tone and purpose of the brief biographies and reminds us that children love to hear true stories of great people. Each story "is as charming and entertaining as a fairy tale, but every word of it is true history written in easy language for the boys and girls of America" (11). The appeal comes not necessarily because the biographical sketches are true but because they in fact resemble fairy tales. The title of Brooks' piece, "Benjamin Franklin, The Candlemaker's Son, Who with his Kite Discovered that Electricity is the Cause of Lightning," suggests the tale-like quality of the common boy performing an extraordinary feat. Brooks frames the story with a discussion of lightning rods and electricity, similar to creation myths which answer such questions as "Why is the sky blue?" or "Where did fire come from?" The story begins, "Did any of my little readers ever look at a lightning rod putting up from the roof of a house, and do you know what that lightning rod is for? I will tell you" (90). The purpose of a lightning rod follows, along with a discussion of its invention. Brooks tells us that 200 years before everyone lived in fear of lightning and no one knew how to harness its power. After two pages of explication on the marvels of electricity's power, Brooks asks,

Is this not a very strange and a very wonderful power? And would you not like to hear the story of the great man who first caught from the skies this vivid, flashing lightning, and found out that he could harness it, almost as easily as we can harness a horse, and make the very thing which people had always dreaded as a terrible destroyer, the best friend and servant of man? Did you say you would like to hear this story? I will tell it to you. His name was Benjamin Franklin. (91)

Using the discussion of the lightning rod as a pretext to really tell about Franklin's life and greatness, the remainder of the account makes little further mention of lightning or electricity.

Further reflecting the tale-like beginning of "once upon a time," Brooks begins his actual story about Franklin, "A very long time ago, perhaps about four hundred years, there lived in Northamptonshire, England, a poor blacksmith whose name was Franklin" (91). A brief genealogy of Benjamin's family follows, stressing his great heritage and the

appeal and opportunities of America that spurred Josiah to emigrate to "the New World" (92). We are introduced to young Benjamin working in his father's candle shop, running errands and performing menial odd jobs. "But 'Ben,' as he was called, did not like this business. He would very much rather look in the books and read the easy stories" (92-93). This led naturally to the apprenticeship with his brother James, and before long he learned the printer's trade. But things did not run smoothly with his brother, as Brooks tells us.

Would you think it strange if I told you that Benjamin did not like his brother James? It is a fact, he did not. They often quarreled, for James did not treat his little brother right and sometimes gave him beatings. (96-97)

This led Franklin to the determination to leave, and "gathering a few of his books, he went aboard a sloop sailing for New York" (97), continuing on to Philadelphia where he became a successful printer. While these events do not relate directly to how Brooks frames the story of the lightning rod, they serve to show the development necessary to produce the genius required to "harness" lightning--with honesty, dedication, and perseverance as key characteristics stressed.

Two pages detailing some of Franklin's electrical study, including the kite experiment, precede the final pages which emphasize his patriotic services to the United States. Because "the English people undertook a very great injustice to the American colonies" (105), that is taxation without representation, the colonies solicited Franklin's help in diplomatic missions first to England and then to France. Of course, maxims of Poor Richard intersperse the text at various places, reminding us of the foundation of his character and achievements recounted. Brooks ends with Franklin successfully securing in the treaty with France and establishing peace. Overstating the importance of the treaty for the purpose of elevating the subject of the story, we are told that "it is believed that this treaty with France and the aid of the French people gave us are what saved our country from defeat. If so, is not Franklin almost or quite as great as George Washington?" (110). Certainly for Brooks, Franklin was among the greatest, if not the foremost in importance,

of all Americans who have ever lived. This sort of heroizing, as well as the simplifying the story for young readers, shows the historical man in his most mythic glory.

Evident in Brooks and other late century depictions of Franklin is the fairy-tale aspect of the emerging myth. This phenomenon relates both to a late Victorian interest in the antiquarian and to the emergence of modern fairy tales, as well as a growing sense of childhood and adolescence as distinct phases of human development. Reacting to the problems and complexities resulting from growing industrialization and urbanization, late Victorians perceived in the medieval mind--with its characteristic quality of innocence, vitality, conviction, and spontaneity--traits which appeared not only refreshing but rejuvenating to a troubled society. A common thread woven through the various manifestations of this antimodern impulse lay an emphasis on medieval "childishness," with the terms "childish" or "childlike" appearing "often enough to constitute a leitmotif in discussions of nearly all medieval mental traits, from innocence to spontaneity to fantasy" (Lears 143). This obsession with medieval childishness reflected a more general interest in childhood, with a consequential shift in juvenile literature as well.

In an attempt to salvage and revitalize children's literature from decades of incessant moralizing, enthusiasm for fantasy and fairy tales grew. Jackson Lears points out that

as early as 1868, John Ruskin had complained that modern nursery stories had succumbed to a leaden didacticism, and that only a revival of traditional fairy tales would restore freshness and vigor to the child's imagination. During subsequent decades, as if in response to Ruskin's summons, brownies, sprites, and elves of all description returned to Anglo-American children's literature. Some roamed the pages of reissued traditional tales; others were newly invented. Nearly all, in their impish irrationality, embodied the romantic conception of children's minds--which bore important resemblances to the psychoanalytic conception--the belief that children lived in a discrete mental realm, unbounded by the restrictions of rational adulthood. Like primitive tellers of tales, children believed in wish-fulfillment and the omnipotence of thoughts; they clung to an animistic conception of life. (170)

The enormous popularity of books such as Andrew Lang's series of *The Colour Fairy Books*, initiated with *The Blue Fairy Book* in 1889, testifies to the relevance of Ruskin's observation. But enthusiasm extended far beyond fairy tales to encompass popular

legends as well. The appropriation of the Franklin story within the Alger myth (complete with the "fairy godfather" patron) reinforced the fairy-tale aspect (reminiscent of Cinderella) of Benjamin's early life. Franklin appeared in the context of this revival as merely a newly invented fairy story, a concrete representation of the reality of wish-fulfillment, if only a little perseverance and hard work are applied.

One longer biography published as part of the "Young Folk's Library of Choice Literature" reflects both the trend in the simplification of the narrative and of the language of the retelling. The 1895 publication of *Benjamin Franklin* by the Educational Publishing Company remains as one of the most condescending examples from this period, complete with tale-like characteristics and stilted dialogue. The style parallels the simplicity and monotony of a beginning child's primer.

Benjamin Franklin was born a long time ago.  
He was born in an odd little house in Boston.

The house was very near the old South Church.

Benjamin was born on Sunday. "Let us take him across the street to the church this very day," said his father. "We will have him christened at once.

So the little baby went to church, you see the very day he was born.

(3)

The larger type and the simple sentence structure, often with one sentence per paragraph, further add to the triteness of this biography, whose authorship Buxbaum attributes to Hazel Nisbit (216).

Clearly by the end of the nineteenth century Franklin's image as a mythic (even fairy-tale) American was firmly entrenched into the consciousness of the country. His continued appearance into peripheral material shows the extent he pervaded the culture. For instance, a page of puzzles and riddles in a February 1887 issue of *St. Nicholas* features a puzzle where "the words forming this numerical enigma are pictured instead of described" (320). In providing a hint to the reader, the clue indicates "the answer, consisting of forty-five letters, is one of Poor Richard's maxims" (320). Many readers like myself, however, probably had to consult the March issue to find the answer: "The eye

of the master will do more work than both his hands." Or, a March 1893 issue of *St. Nicholas* contains an article, "Philadelphia--A City of Homes," where author Talcott Williams digresses to tell of Franklin, an early leading force in the city

which for two hundred years has grown so as to make families more and more comfortable; so as to set each in its own house; so as to make life easier and easier for the average ordinary family which is neither rich nor poor, which wins its way by work, owns the roof over its head, and stands secure in modest unquestioned independence. (325-326)

Given to hyperbole, Williams reasons that if a child feels secure and if every family resides independent in their own home, then the United States is a success. This sort of logic suggests the roots to a later suburban ideal, where home ownership becomes a central component of the American dream. This success then comes in large part because of the city of Philadelphia, which was the early home of none other than Benjamin Franklin, whose greatness cannot be disputed (hearkening to Matthews' earlier reasoning), given his signature upon the three most significant documents which secured liberty: "He was the only American who signed the Declaration of Independence, the Treaty of Peace, and the Constitution" (325). The early Philadelphian serves as an example of one who "put all at stake in his country's service" (325). The acknowledged fame of Franklin is further suggested in Oliver Herford's satiric *An Alphabet of Celebrities* where Franklin figures in the letter "F": F is for Franklin who fearfully shocks/ The feelings of Fenelon, Faber, and Fox," or in the juvenile *Alphabet of American Subjects For Good Children* where the entry "E" reads, "Electricity, which Franklin's kite/ Drew down to earth from the cloud's dizzy height."

Increasingly, Franklin is seen as not only the typical American, but also as one of the greatest Americans to have lived. As the patriotic fervor of the late century further nationalized the already important traits of the self-made man--industry, frugality, and perseverance-- Franklin's status continued to rise enhancing his mythic proportion. The heroic quality of his life and representations of it grew more myth-like as writers continued selectively to focus on traits beneficial for their particular cause. Additionally, the

simplification of texts for very young children served to further the fairy tale quality of his life. In the next chapter, in an analysis of two full-length biographies published respectively in 1897 and 1898, I will show how the complete mythification of Benjamin Franklin crowned the end of the nineteenth century's image, reflecting the evolution of the century's varying ideologies and establishing the final figure against which early twentieth-century writers would react.

## CHAPTER 7

### THE FIN DE SIECLE MYTHICIZED IMAGE

As the nineteenth century draws to a close, the image of Benjamin Franklin reaches its mythic peak, as evidenced by two turn of the century biographies, *True to His Home[.]* *A Tale of Boyhood Franklin* (1897), by Hezekiah Butterworth, and *The True Story of Benjamin Franklin* (1898), by Elbridge Streeter Brooks. Butterworth and Brooks, both late-century popular authors of children's literature, reflect in their juvenile biographies on this foremost American patriot a culmination of the social and cultural ideologies that had been influencing the image throughout the century. Remnants and influences of earlier biographers and authors surface as a larger-than-life mythic hero emerges, who is seen as responsible for almost every significant event in colonial American history. Never really shedding Weems' early Christianizing, the Franklin of these two biographies exists as a composite, a religious, self-made entrepreneur whose dedication to his country is unquestioned and who typifies and demonstrates all that we see as worthwhile in America. In analyzing these two biographies, I will show how various influences of the previous one hundred years continue to be felt, and how elements of earlier eras endure. Though the author's approach in each book is different, one claiming to be historical fiction and one straight biography, the two are strikingly similar, with the distinction between fact and fiction almost nonexistent.

The most immediate influence from Alger's fiction and the fictionalized life of Mayhew's Franklin can be seen in Butterworth's, *True to His Home*. As a journalist and regular contributor to a popular juvenile periodical, *Youth's Companion*, a magazine he had connections with for almost twenty-five years, Butterworth found in Franklin the perfect

subject to demonstrate one of his favorite topics, overcoming obstacles to achieve success. Maintaining the late century nationalistic fervor, Butterworth attempts to depict the colonial leader in what he calls historical fiction. Acknowledging Parton's biography as the source of many of his facts, Butterworth tells us in the preface that while his plan in writing the book is suggested by biography, he intends to show what he sees as the important and interesting aspects of Franklin's domestic life, which will allow the reader to identify and understand the reasons for his enormous success in his "public life" (v). In a purely fictionalized account based loosely on events taken from the *Autobiography*, the book takes on a topical arrangement, similar to a training handbook or success manual, with the intent of providing valuable lessons for young readers. We see the notion of literature's practical utility dominating the book as the function of the story lies in inculcating children with moral values.

Expressing his own veneration for his subject, an awe which colors the events related and the image depicted, Butterworth writes,

I have written no book with a deeper sympathy with my subject, for, although fiction, the story very truthfully shows that the good intentions of a life which has seemed to fail do not die, but live in others whom they inspire. (v)

Following the tradition firmly established by English author Henry Mayhew, Butterworth brings in the character of Uncle Benjamin as an important influence upon young Franklin. We see Uncle Ben as a wise, old man whose "visions all seemed to end in disappointment" (v), who gets another chance at success vicariously through the life of his nephew. He has an everlastingly deep influence upon his godson "whom he morally educate[s] to become what he himself had failed to be" (v). Ending the preface by quoting a "great critic," presumably Parton, Butterworth tells us that the boy in his story "has turned out to be the greatest man that America ever bore in her bosom or set eyes upon" (vii), with no other American having more influence on others or having done "so much for the welfare of so many" (vii).

Rejecting the approach of "historical fiction," Elbridge Brooks authors what he feels is an historically accurate biography, claiming to have written a genuine account of Franklin's life *The True Story of Benjamin Franklin, The American Statesman*. However, by the turn of the century, the mythic dimension had so transformed the image of Franklin that Brooks' work almost reads as better fiction than many of the self-described fictional accounts preceding it. Brooks, like Butterworth, emerged as a popular late-century writer of juvenile literature, publishing over forty books for young readers until his death in 1902. His life of Franklin, written near the end of his life, represents one of his most creative efforts. Avoiding the use of dialogue and personal narrative in an attempt to increase credibility and relate the "facts," Brooks creates a larger-than-life man, to whom he gives credit for every significant event in colonial American history. From the preface on, we see Franklin as a talented, multi-faceted man:

Statesman, philanthropist, patriot, inventor, author, printer, humorist, business-man, helper, friend, the lover of children, of humanity and the world --all of these was Benjamin Franklin, most remarkable of Americans. (5)

Fully within the nationalistic zeal of the age, Brooks contends that those who did so much to secure freedom and in turn shape our destinies should have their stories retold, and he places Franklin in his series of Children's Lives of Great Men, along with Washington, Lincoln, Columbus, and Grant.

Though Franklin, according to Brooks, "belongs" to the whole world, more "especially does he belong to America" (5). Of those held in highest esteem, "among Americans none is worthier [of] remembrance, veneration, or imitation" (5). Brooks places Franklin in the tradition of the self-made, patriotic citizen whose life and actions remain worthy of emulation. Possessing almost every magnanimous trait imaginable, Brooks tells us what he hopes to do in yet another account of this great American's life.

For the boys and girls of America I have tried to tell once more Franklin's remarkable story; hoping that, as they read anew of his struggles, his successes, and his greatness, they may find, perhaps, new things to honor

and new traits to emulate in that shrewd, kindly, big-brained, great-hearted, noble old man, of whom the French poet said: --

"He snatched the thunderbolt from heaven and the sceptre from tyrants." (5)

The tone of the preface, as well as the proliferation of laudatory adjectives, indicate the reverence paid to the Herculean, almost god-like man that Brooks creates in his biography. For Brooks, no man stands higher or has accomplished more.

Many of the titles of the book's thirteen chapters provide a sense of Franklin's mythic achievements, and warrant listing to provide a sense of the glorified attitude Brooks holds for his subject: "How He Saved His Country for the First Time," "How He Became Dr. Franklin," "How He Faced the Parliament of England," "How He Fought the Tax Tyrants," "How He Signed His Name with a Flourish," "How He Saved the Country a Second Time," "How He Became President of Pennsylvania," and "How He Saved the Country the Third Time." While Brooks does not neglect the early events of Franklin's youth, continuing to show how the later greatness resulted from early virtue and work, he gives more attention and importance to the later accomplishments, which he deems essential for having created America and securing liberty. As these chapter titles suggest, America stands as a great nation largely because of the efforts of this founding father, who "saves" his country not once but three times.

In both biographies, Franklin's narrative of his own life serves as the basis for retelling the circumstances surrounding his birth and his development as a young boy. Butterworth begins his actual account much like a novel, freely integrating invented dialogue in the manner of Mayhew and Weems. The story line roughly follows the events chronicled in the *Autobiography*, though the actual historical life serves more as an outline on which the author can develop various ideas with regards to his own didactic purposes. Butterworth establishes the fundamental religious faith of the Franklin family from the very beginning, though no particular sect is ever specified. He attempts to show the foundation that serves as a sure footing for Benjamin, even though he wavers temporarily from the

faith in his younger years. The scene of domestic tranquility is established as the infant Ben enters the world.

"A baby is nothing new in this family," said Josiah Franklin, the father. "This is the fifteenth. Let me take it over to the church and have it christened this very day. There should be no time lost in christening. What say you friends all? It is a likely boy, and it is best to start him right in life at once." (1)

From the beginning Josiah says he will give the child to the Lord, reference to his early hope that one son would serve in the ministry. Though the father never realizes this aspiration, Butterworth suggests that this infant will serve God in a much grander way. Josiah hopes that if the little child "should do anything exceptional in life he will remember that the highest duty and thanks go to God" (2), foreshadowing that indeed Benjamin will do many "exceptional" things in his life, all of which the author wants the reader to remember comes about because of a generous God.

Like Weems (and to a degree like Franklin himself), Butterworth tries to establish the unblemished heritage and stock from which this great colonial leader came. Josiah and his wife talk about the good family name and the given name their young son has received. Though Josiah's brother Benjamin did not succeed in any spectacular worldly way, he always honored his name, striving to be honest in all his dealings. Franklin's father remarks that "Benjamin" is a good name, "and a name lasts for life" (2) .

"A good name is rather to be chosen than riches, and loving favor rather than silver or gold." A man may get riches and yet be poor. It is he that seeks the welfare of others more than wealth for himself that lives for things that are best. (2)

This allows more authorial discussion on family ancestry and the noble deeds performed on both sides of the family, always being tied to the later greatness of their important descendant. For instance, Butterworth discusses Franklin's Grandfather Peter Folger who bought his wife's freedom. The liberation typifies the independence of America, an event in which their grandson will play a crucial role:

And so he bought the grandmother of that Benjamin Franklin who was to "snatch the thunderbolts from heaven and the scepter from tyrants," to sign

the Declaration of Independence which brought forth a new government for mankind, and to form a treaty of peace with England which was to make America free. (4)

This ancestral connection, particularly the focus on Folger, serves an important link to previous ideologies in at least two ways. Lingering from the tradition of the well-born and bred, Butterworth continues to show that Franklin comes from a respected family, an issue more important in England but still of concern in America despite the democratic rhetoric that birth had no relationship to status. As low born men made their fortunes during the latter half of the nineteenth century, the distinction between the established rich and the "new rich" suggests a continuing prejudice against those whose family and educational background proved less impressive. Franklin, though his own immediate family suffered from indigent circumstances, is clearly placed in the tradition of being well-born.

This more typically non-American stress on pedigree Butterworth counters with the emphasis on Mary Folger, a freed bondservant. Peter Folger, a resident of Nantucket involved in various trades from teaching to surveying to serving as a town and court clerk, purchased Mary as a maid-servant for £20, only later to free and marry her. This maternal grandmother of Franklin's shows the possibility of social mobility even to those of low birth, a cherished American ideal. This idea of mobility becomes crucial to authors like Horatio Alger, whose fiction shows numerous instances of boy heroes rising from rags to gain not just a comfortable income but, more important, respectability. Alger's mythology of the dramatic rise in social status, however, is now more clearly seen for what it is, a myth: Richard Hofstadter has shown that historically "the chance of emergence from indentured servitude to a position of wealth or renown [has been] statistically negligible" (62). Still, notable cases like Mary Folger or the that of the Maryland lawyer Daniel Dulany provide the proof to writers like Butterworth and Alger of the possibility of elevating one's social status in a dramatic way. Butterworth uses the archetypal rise to respectability by citing first the Folger connection, with Grandmother Folger as an

example, and then by demonstrating Franklin's own dramatic rise from indigent circumstances.

Frequently quoting outside authority to reinforce a point, Butterworth addresses the notion of indigent beginnings to readers who may find themselves in similar circumstances, reinforcing the story-like quality of narrative.

Wendell Phillips used to say that there were two kinds of people in the world—one who went ahead and did something, and another, who showed how that thing ought to have been done in some other way. [Franklin] belonged to the former class.

But I doubt if any reader of this volume was ever born to so hard an estate as this boy. Let us follow him into the story land of childhood. (8)

Then Butterworth finally introduces us to the protagonist of the book, who, even as a child, appears as a remarkable, amazingly gifted individual. Franklin, according to the author, "emerged almost from babyhood a reader, and soon began to 'devour'--to use the word then applied to his habit--all the books that fell within his reach" (10). Even when working in his father's shop, he ran "around the candle molds, talking like a philosopher" (24). Butterworth interjects that this is the boy who will become the man to stand in the French court, getting help from the king which allows America to establish independence. Though Benjamin is nothing less than remarkable, Butterworth continues to stress that he began in less desirable circumstances than current readers, and by implication, modern readers have the possibility of equal fortune and respectability since they have more advantages.

To show that young people must also learn from mistakes, Butterworth recounts the story of "The Whistle," a parable told to "show that people spend too much time and money on things that could be more cheaply purchased or that they could do without" (25), and an example of a lesson Benjamin uses to guide his adult behavior. We further see extraordinary genius demonstrated through his inventive play as a child. As an avid swimmer, Franklin devises gadgets to fit on his hands and feet to help his propulsion, and he even rigs a kite to carry him upstream against the current. As with most activities and

thoughts of his youth, the kite flying is tied to his later work, in this instance the important scientific discovery. As an old man watches Franklin's inventiveness, he suggests the later discovery, using language similar to Emerson's "hitch your wagon to a star."

Speaking to Benjamin, the man remarks,

But you've got imagination enough to hitch the world to a kite and send it off among the planets and shootin' stars, no one knows where. I never did see any little shaver that had so much kite-flyin' in his head as you. (32)

Butterworth adds that Franklin

could go kite-flying in his mind, and no one could see the flight. One cannot make an eagle run around a barnyard like a hen. . . . He had begun kite-flying; he will fly a kite again one day. (33)

Another example of Franklin's later greatness foreshadowed in his youth centers on the stone wharf building in Boston, which Butterworth shows not only as the foundation for Benjamin's commitment to honesty, but suggests that it spawned an early love for public improvements: "When one begins so soon in life to improve the town, there can be no telling what he will do when he grows up" (59). In most every instance, Butterworth suggests Franklin's later achievements in thoughts or activities of his youth.

Following the tradition of injecting fictional elements into the narrative, Butterworth becomes an eclectic borrower from previous authors. For instance, Butterworth not only relies on Weems' use of character dialogue to tell the story and move the narrative, he also includes fictitious details, such as a pet guinea pig, which he recasts to fit his own purpose. In Weems' biography, Benjamin has a guinea pig who provides a listening ear to the boy's troubles, a device used to allow the reader to learn all the young boy's woes. Butterworth also shows Franklin with a guinea pig, but uses it to demonstrate his conscientious care of the animals and his aversion to cruelty to any forms of life. Similarly, as we have seen, Mayhew's Uncle Ben appears as a mentor, though Butterworth's preceptor does not play the central role he does in the earlier book.

In addition to Uncle Benjamin, who primarily teaches his godson the virtue of hard work, Butterworth introduces a Great-Uncle Thomas, a resourceful blacksmith who is the

hereditary link to the inventiveness we see in the young boy and later the grown man. Moreover, two aunts enter the scene at one point, providing a connection with religion, frugality, education, and manners. These aunts, Esther and Prudence, come for a short visit, and they encourage young Ben to live properly, much in the tradition (but to different ends) of the Mark Twain's civilizing women who set out to ameliorate Huck Finn. Impressed with their young nephew, Franklin's aunts provide temporary support for him to attend school. Even the very names of the aunts suggest important traits Butterworth will show as central to the boy's ultimate success. Esther, as a Biblical name, reinforces the importance of religious faith, a part of Franklin we will see developed later in the narrative. Prudence epitomizes one of the reigning Poor Richard virtues, frugality, also further developed in subsequent incidents. Their financial assistance provides the opportunity for Franklin to attend school, although the only notable thing Butterworth specifically mentions Ben having learned in his short schooling is writing and penmanship. Still, after an example of his flowing signature, we read, "That signature was to remap the world. It was to be set to four documents that changed the world" (49). While previous biographies have talked of the famous three documents Franklin signed that secured American independence, Butterworth lists a fourth, possibly the *Autobiography*, though he never tells us what it is.

Despite the influence of many relatives, the most sustained influence upon Butterworth's Franklin comes from his Uncle Ben. Though Butterworth never develops this uncle to the degree that Mayhew did, the significance of his early guidance and influence remains unquestioned. When this uncle hears that a nephew has received his name, he decides to leave England and spend his final years in America. We see him on many occasions as a link to the Poor Richard-like qualities so strongly associated with the grown Franklin. One evening as the family sits by the fireplace, Benjamin "asks for the twice-told tale of Sir William" (85). The story is one of his uncle's favorites, and he tells "it picturesquely with much moralizing" (85). Butterworth sets up the importance of the

story by telling us that this account of America's most likely first self-made man, Sir William Phips, will parallel in many ways Franklin's own story, for "he would be another Sir William himself some day" (85). The retelling of the Phips story identifies Uncle Ben with Cotton Mather who first depicted the adventurer and opportunist as the exemplar of his *Pietas in Patriam*, a part of his larger work *Magnalia Christi Americana* (Mather 272-356).

Uncle Benjamin asks his godson if he remembers the brick house in Boston where lived "Sir William Phips, or Phipps, the first provincial Governor under the charter which he himself had brought from England" (83-84). This leads to the story of how Phips rose from poverty to a position of wealth and influence, symbolized by the brick house and his position as governor. Phips, born in Maine, came to Boston as a young boy. "A Boston boy like young Franklin," this poor sailor learned to read and write "among the pots and kettles of life" (84). A poor widow serves as William's tutor and, in the course of their lessons, inspires him to work hard and strive to achieve. As they talk they often reflect upon a brick house they can see from the window, "looming over the bowery lane" (84), an icon of success. Phips promises the widow that some day he will live in a brick house, a symbol that continues to suggest one's independence and ability to obtain at least modest financial security.

From Boston Sir William ships off to the Bahamas as a sailor, dreaming of becoming a captain. Due to his integrity and diligence, he quickly rises in esteem and position, for "the ship owners saw that he had honor, and that they could trust him. He was advanced in the service, and he learned how to command a ship" (87). Then, in what seems surprising in that we have had no indication of the age of the young Phips or his female mentor, "he returned and married the widow, and went for again to try to reap the harvest of the sea for her, carrying with him his dreams. --He was an honest man" (87). Because of his exemplary service, he becomes Commander Phips, and obtains the

permission of King James to look for sunken treasure. Not succeeding in his first attempt, he continues, remembering that "ideals change into realities and will is the way" (88).

On the second attempt he takes with him an old Indian guide who remembers the wreck of the ship, and they find the sunken ship and treasure. Phips, however, is one of those unique individuals who does not "go mad" with gold, and takes the entire bounty back to the Duke of Albemarle, who funded the expedition. Because of his loyalty, Phips is rewarded handsomely, as the Duke explains, "And to you, for your honor and honesty, shall be given an ample fortune, and there shall be bestowed upon you the honor of knighthood" (91). After nearly a half a dozen exclamations describing Phips as "an honest man," the Duke gives him some advice concerning his new found wealth, advice strikingly similar to what Mayhew's Uncle Ben gives his young charge: "A man must get a living somehow; either he must save or be a slave" (91). Phips, a wise steward of his wealth, returns and buys a brick house, later becoming a great leader in the colonies. This story causes young Benjamin to reflect that "he surely was almost as poor as Sir William was at his age. Could he turn his own dreams into gold, or into that which is better than gold?" (91).

The parallels between Mather's life of Phips and Franklin's *Autobiography* are undeniable, as Sacvan Bercovitch details.

The most prominent of Mather's success stories is also the longest biography he wrote, the "Life of His Excellency Sir William Phips, Knt." Patriot, "inventor," and "enterprising genius," Phips' career--a model of "one raised by God"--unmistakably prefigures Franklin's *Autobiography*. Born into a destitute family in a far border settlement, he becomes "a son to his own labors," the now-familiar poor provincial boy who makes good in the Big City. He leaves at the age of eighteen for Boston, the "piace of the most business in those parts of the world, [because] he expected there more commodiously to pursue the *Spes Majorum et Meliorum* [aspirations toward greater and better things]--hopes which had inspired him." And the fulfillment of those hopes, his progress from apprentice ship-carpenter to bourgeois proprietor to governor of the colony, is marked, step by step, by the Franklinesque "virtues": "chastity," "prudence," and "resolution," "indefatigable patience, with proportional *diligence*," "*honesty with industry*, and always, of course, humility and piety. (41)

Phips' charge to his crew "fear God, and be honest, and mind your business, and you don't know what you may come to," a plea he makes as they sail past his birthplace and he remembers his fortunate rise, observes Bercovitch, is reflected in the *Autobiography* a century later when "Ben Franklin's son received well-nigh identical 'Inducement' to emulate his illustrious father who had, like Phips, 'emerg'd from . . . Poverty and Obscurity' and 'with the Blessings of God, so well succeeded'" (41-42). Butterworth echoes this same sentiment as he urges young readers to follow the examples of these two great Americans.

Under the careful tutelage of his uncle and others, Franklin develops important traits which help him succeed in later life. Characters like Uncle Benjamin appear on the scene at crucial times when significant points need stressing. For instance, when a skeptical old Scot in Boston, Jamie, tells Uncle Benjamin that he does not attend church in the winter because of how cold it gets in the old South Church, the two conjecture about a stove that could heat the whole chapel. Uncle Benjamin philosophizes on how the problem could be solved and wishes someone would invent a more efficient system of heating. He comments that "he lives longest in this world who invents the most useful things for others" (94). Then, speaking to Franklin, he says, "If you could invent a stove that would warm the whole church, you would have a *projected* life" (91). The "future inventor of the Franklin stove" wonders to himself, "Have I a chance?" (91). In instances like this, Uncle Ben appears on the scene, continuing in the Rousseauian preceptor role, though, as I have observed, the importance of the mentor figure diminishes in lieu of more important aspects of the narrative and image.

Butterworth also goes to great length to tell of Franklin's early efforts at self-education, and the great skill he developed in writing. Suggesting both his writing ability and, as the pseudonym implies, his penchant for public acts of beneficence, Franklin's work as "Silence Dogood" is discussed. To Butterworth the pseudonym becomes another name for Benjamin, and is used interchangeably on many occasions in the book. For

example, to complete a lesson on great literature, "One Sunday, after church, in summer, Uncle Ben the poet and Silence Dogood went down the long wharf to enjoy the breezes from the sea" (124). In assuming the role and characteristics of his literary creation, Franklin's religious devotion is subtly implied--he is going out *after* church, indicating his attendance. A literary discussion near Boston harbor leads to a recounting of many great authors who overcame hardships to succeed: Browning, Tennyson, Keats, Burton, and Horace, to name a few Butterworth mentions. Uncle Ben suggests that men's lives are a type of book from which much can be learned.

This leads to an authorial digression on the type of "book" or life we can read in Franklin's story, and Butterworth comments on how Boston reminds the nineteenth-century biographer of the great hero of his book.

It has been my lot, in a somewhat active life in the city of Boston for twenty-five years, to meet every day an inspiring name that all the world knows, and that stands for what right resolution, the overcoming of besetting sins in youth, and persevering energy may accomplish against the ridicule of the world. There have been many books written having that name as title--FRANKLIN. (130)

Butterworth suggests that not only has much been written about the life of this colonial leader, but that anyone who lives and demonstrates these redeeming virtues can assume his name. Just as someone who betrays a close friend might be called a "Judas," suggesting the betrayal of the New Testament Christ by Judas Iscariot, so a man who perseveres and overcomes weakness and great obstacles becomes a "Franklin." This notion of naming, wherein the appellation Franklin represents certain qualities, indicates the extent of the mythicizing by the end of the nineteenth century. Butterworth leaves a final charge to young readers before moving back to narrative:

Boys with a purpose, face the future, do good in silence [i.e., become a "Silence Dogood"], and trust. . . . Be in dead earnest, and face the future, and forward march! The captains of industry and the leaders of every achievement say, "Guide right! Turn to the right, and advance!" (131)

Following a device used by earlier biographers, Butterworth excerpts portions of the *Autobiography*--"Let us follow him through his own narrative until he meets the eyes of

Deborah Read, a fair lass of eighteen" (138). Selective passages from Part One of the *Autobiography* take Franklin to the time he establishes himself as a successful printer. Interpretive comments, usually suggestive of later greatness, often interrupt the narrative. For instance, as Franklin's future wife sees him for the first time during his initial entrance into Philadelphia, penniless and dressed in ragged clothes, we read, "Never mind, Ben Franklin. You will one day stand in Versailles in the velvet robes of state, and the French king will give you his portrait framed with four hundred and eight diamonds" (140). The connection between his youth and later greatness continues to receive great stress.

The first part of Brooks' biography is in many points similar to Butterworth's novel, with both men relying on the narrative line of the *Autobiography* in retelling the great American's youth. Brooks, however, despite the implied intent to avoid historical fiction, begins more fancifully than Butterworth, imitative of the style and tone of the fairy tale tradition, placing Franklin among many of the most remarkable men of history.

This is the story of Benjamin Franklin, most remarkable of Americans. How remarkable a man he was I shall try to tell you. What he did for his country, for you and for me, is a tale worth the telling and the hearing. For his story is fully as remarkable as was he himself. As wise as Solomon, as simple as Aesop, as witty as Mark Twain, as inventive as Edison, as gentle as a lamb, as bold as a lion, he tried his hand at everything and failed at nothing. Sixty of his eighty-five years of life were spent for the good of his countrymen. *He built America*; for what our republic is to-day is largely due to the prudence, the forethought, the statesmanship, the enterprise, the greatness, the ability, and the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin. His story is one that the boys and girls of America should know by heart, and should all love to hear. And that is why I try to tell it.

Listen to his story. (Emphasis added, 11-12)

Resorting to hyperbole, Brooks feels no greater American has lived. Transcending and surpassing both the ancients (Solomon and Aesop) and the contemporary (Twain and Edison) in greatness, Franklin not only "built" America but, in many ways, *is America*. He not only typifies the United States but embodies the values it represents. Like a catechism internalized and committed to memory, so Franklin's life should be continually remembered and repeated. As in any great myth or tale, Franklin overcomes all obstacles against all odds in fulfilling his appointed task.

With frequent authorial interruptions, the basic narrative of the life begins in the traditional religious framing with the young baby's christening on the day of his birth. The speed of the christening almost becomes a corollary to his righteousness, with the timing of an infant's baptism tied to the righteousness of the family and baby. While the birthplace of Franklin no longer stands, Brooks tells us that a plaque marks the spot of the original house, a place now where trolleys ceaselessly whiz through subways, "an outgrowth of Franklin's wonderful brain" (13-14). As in this instance, almost any mention of modern conveniences or accomplishments is somehow tied to Franklin, even if the connection is never clear.

Brooks retells the main events of the *Autobiography*, interjecting comments to stress certain characteristics or inventing details when Franklin's own narrative proves too scant. Franklin's home life is depicted as idyllic, with "plenty to eat, plenty to do, warm, comfortable, contented, united" (15). Then with a method similar to a religious catechism, Brooks queries the reader, "that should have made a pleasant home for any boy, should it not?" (15). Answering his own question, he responds, "Evidently it did for Benjamin Franklin, even though he did grow restless and unsettled at last, as will most ambitious boys" (15). Even Franklin's potential weaknesses, such as dissatisfaction with home and position, we see in a favorable light, in this instance as a mark of worthwhile ambition. And if the reader were unable to find an appropriate lesson in his life, Brooks reminds us that "Franklin always managed to find a moral in every thing" (16). As proof Brooks quotes the story of the whistle and observes, "he was a wise little fellow, even if he did sometimes get sold" (17). Other examples like the building of the wharf out of stolen stones provides "another lesson, which stayed by him all through his eventful life, --that 'honesty is the best policy'" (19). With this type of moralizing, an important stylistic feature develops in Brooks. Not only are maxims quoted at various times in the narrative, their authorship attributed to Franklin or Poor Richard, but more usually the intent or actual

saying itself is smoothly integrated into the text or authorial commentary, as the Brooks himself appropriates the values he sees embodied in his subject.

Like Butterworth, Brooks talks about Benjamin's early interest in swimming, and his evident creativity in various gadgets and experiments. In what appears to be an attempt to pique the interest of young readers, as well as show the roots of later inventiveness, Brooks tells of flippers and hand boards designed to increase propulsion in the water, and remarks, "But just see what a pioneer in improvements was Benjamin Franklin! To-day, professional swimmers try the same sort of hand-and-foot helps" (21). His experiment in letting a kite tow him through the water is seen as the beginning of "kite-travel which so many learned men are now trying to turn to practical use" (21). Additionally, as in Butterworth's account, his early interest in kites foreshadows his later great kite experiment which proved the electrical nature of lightning.

In the course of the biography, anything that Franklin tries, he becomes accomplished at, becoming exemplary in a number of skills. Brooks depicts the young boy as a great scholar, though he had little schooling. And after spending two unhappy years in his father's candle shop, "Benjamin Franklin began to learn the printer's trade, and to-day he is remembered and honored by all the printers in America as one of the greatest in their great and honorable craft" (24). Any weakness the young boy has, Brooks places the blame for it on someone else; his hero must remain unblemished. Brooks makes certain that nothing in Benjamin's life can be used as an excuse or justification for wrongdoing by young readers. For instance, Franklin mentions having difficulty with arithmetic, but responsibility is transferred to an inadequate teacher: "Perhaps his teacher was at fault; for arithmetic is really easy, if you can only start your train of reasoning right" (30). Ben also shows remarkable discipline as a youth. He studies or reads whenever he has an opportunity, and he lives frugally, even by rationing what he eats, a way to save money to purchase books. Brooks asks, "Did you ever hear of such a boy? Few could stand that

training; but Benjamin Franklin was wonderfully strong, and this over-study and under-eating did not hurt him" (32).

Even the apprenticeship with James shows the younger brother in the best light. When James is imprisoned for printing material in defiance of the city assembly, young Benjamin, driven by his conviction of freedom for the press, takes over where others dare not proceed.

When James Franklin was sent to prison, there was a great discussion among his friends just what to do about the *Courant*. But Ben said it must not stop, and those most interested told him to go ahead and edit the paper.

He did so; and instead of being frightened by what had been done to his brother, he kept the *Courant* on in just the same way, making one of the earliest fights for what is called "the liberty of the press" in America. Pretty plucky for a boy editor of sixteen, was it not? (37)

Brooks further lauds the degree of great courage it took on the young boy's part since editors of that time were punished by having their ears clipped and by being whipped, jailed, and often killed.

When James is released from jail, he puts the paper in Benjamin's name, since the assembly has forbid him to continue publishing in his own name. And "so young Ben, the boy editor, got his name before the world very early in life" (39). But his brother was deceptive and jealous, and "played a mean trick on the boy" (39). James cancels his brother's indentures, but draws up some secret ones, according to Brooks, without Benjamin's knowledge. With his older brother growing increasingly cruel, the young printer looks at ways to get released from his obligations, for "he was an independent youth, accustomed to speak his mind; and he chafed and fretted under his brother's tyranny . . ." (39). But James "would not release him; his father would not help him; he would not stand that life any longer; he would run away. Really, you see, the boy editor's troubles began early in life" (40). Brooks then shows Franklin's promptness in acting by quoting a Poor Richard maxim: "When Benjamin Franklin made up his mind, he generally acted at once. 'Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day' was one of his maxims, you know" (40). The merging of Benjamin Franklin and Poor Richard is

standard by this time, and Brooks speaks as if Franklin and Poor Richard are one and the same. Franklin embodies all the wisdom of the literary persona, and various maxims become guiding phrases in Franklin's life, especially in crucial decisions. The historical figure has been completely subsumed to Poor Richard.

Like Butterworth, Brooks glosses over the circumstances of Franklin's leaving Boston, making it as innocuous as possible. In a short paragraph, Franklin leaves the city of his birth and ends up in New York.

So Ben fixed things up quietly with one of his young friends. He sold some of his precious books to pay his passage. His friend smuggled him on board a sloop bound for New York, the captain of which promised to ask no questions; and on a certain October morning in the year 1723, Ben Franklin, aged seventeen, a runaway apprentice, bade a silent good-by to his boyhood home, and was soon on blue water, bound for New York and a living. (41-42)

Instead of emphasizing such aspects of the flight as the deception involved in getting aboard the ship or even admitting that he was a runaway, Brooks turns his focus on New York and Franklin's inability to get a job. This provides the context for a comment on America's current greatness and how much better things are an hundred years after Franklin.

But wonderful changes have taken place in this land of ours since Benjamin Franklin was a boy; and for the most of them we may thank this same Benjamin Franklin, printer, and those other noble men of his time, who worked with him to make America great. (45)

From New York, Franklin goes on to Philadelphia, "the city that to-day honors, reveres, elevates, and remembers him as her greatest and noblest citizen" (46). The famous entry into Philadelphia follows, with Brooks again pausing to interject a personal reflection and comment. After describing the boy's personal appearance after his long journey and his first encounter with Deborah Read, Brooks remarks, in a way which identifies him with Ben, that

any boy would be a rather seedy-looking object after eleven days of knocking about, with no chance for a change of clothing. I know how it is myself. I tramped across country once with two other boys, when I was about fifteen, on a vacation-walk from New York to Boston, almost without

baggage, and I know what a shabby-looking trio we were when we got to Boston. (48-49)

Despite his rough appearance, Deborah never forgets the stranger she saw that morning, "for, years after, Deborah Read became Mrs. Benjamin Franklin" (48-49).

As Franklin begins working in Philadelphia, he draws the attention of the city's most respected citizens, the governor included. The story-like element of the narrative becomes evident as Franklin heads for England with a letter of recommendation from the Governor. Brooks observes, "It reads almost like a fairy-story, doesn't it? The young man felt that it was almost like a fairy-story too. He felt like a prince coming back; and quite like a prince did he conduct himself" (50). But unlike the fairy tale hero, Benjamin's hopes are dashed in London when he realizes the governor's deception, contrary to the more standard, trustworthy benefactor in Alger's stories.

But Benjamin Franklin was never one to sit down and fret. He never would despair. Just what to do he did not know; but he did know he must do something. He could not go back to America until he had earned enough money to take him back. He must try to get a job, and get it soon. It was rough, wasn't it? But Ben had good health and plenty of pluck, and set out at once to find work. (62)

The characteristic virtues which makes the young printer famous allow him to rise above any situation and to succeed in any endeavor, his difficult situation in England included..

With Franklin in London, Brooks makes mention of the only weakness he allows his hero to have in the entire biography. Franklin has found a job quickly and makes good wages, but he spends his money recklessly.

For the first time in his life he grew careless and went wrong. He fell into bad ways, "sowed his wild oats," as the saying is, forgot his friends in America, forgot his "dear Deborah," and spent month and months in London working steadily at his trade, to be sure, but having what he foolishly called "a good time." (62)

The nature of his "wild oats" Brooks never explicates. To a young or naive reader it would likely be no more than a failing to live frugally or seeking the company of bad friends, all the while forgetting his dear friends and finacé at home. This "wildness," however, is short lived, for

at last, he awoke to the knowledge that he was not doing right. He turned over a new leaf at once, worked hard, saved money, and finally engaged with one of the good friends he had made on the voyage across to go back with him to Philadelphia. (62-63)

So after two years in England, he returns to Philadelphia, dreaming of becoming the city's best printer. While in London and upon returning to America, "he had fallen upon hard times, and only his pluck and knowledge of a trade had carried him through" (63). Very much like an Alger hero, "luck and pluck" see the struggling printer through.

Despite the temporary fall from fortune Franklin experienced at this time, it served to provide a valuable lesson that aided the future leader in more difficult circumstances to follow. Brooks tell us that

he had learned a lesson he never forgot. It was one that stood him well as a guide and a warning through all his busy life. He had learned when to trust and whom to trust. He knew that, as the farmers say, "fine words butter no parsnips." He knew that all is not gold that glitters, and that a man to succeed must help himself, and not rely on others to help him. It takes some men a lifetime to learn all this, but Benjamin Franklin was fortunate enough to learn it early in life. (63)

A subtle shift occurs through this section of the biography as more maxims are now integrated directly into the text rather than merely being quoted either by Poor Richard or by Franklin himself. The wise sayings have become so a part of the author's frame that he no longer consciously separates them from his character. They are an underlying ideology motivating the early patriot's thoughts and actions.

Butterworth and Brooks both move from Franklin's youth to his prosperity as a printer in Philadelphia, and to the various activities which engage his new found "leisure" after his assured financial stability enables him to turn to other interests and concerns. Directly influenced by Mayhew and the tradition of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Butterworth shows that Franklin's success was not without its struggles.<sup>1</sup> In a chapter entitled, "Mr. Calamity," he not only indicates that Benjamin worries about his business but that "Franklin struggles with Franklin," as he searches his soul to determine the extent of his religious faith and commitment, with a personified figure of adversity, a Bunyan-esque Mr. Calamity, often attempting to discourage the rising businessman. Butterworth tells us that

Ben attended church with his uncle until his seventeenth year and then had a period of time when he fell under the influence of deceptive deistic principles. After a period of intense soul searching, he finally "began to see that life without faith had no meaning, but was failure" (177). As compensation for his succumbing to the "natural" man, Butterworth reminds us that at age twenty-two Franklin composed a liturgy, wherein he recorded his commitment to live a life of greater faith and where he prayed for the spiritually weak, himself included. This seems ample proof to Butterworth of the founding father's faith, and he makes no additional mention to any skepticism.

We then see Franklin successfully established as a printer, while Butterworth links his creative genius with the wisdom of Poor Richard. An unusual use of the present tense interrupts the more common past tense, as Butterworth wants to do more than just tell us of Benjamin's achievements but desires to show them in the making.

Franklin is now a man of character, benevolence, wisdom, and humor. He is a printer, a publisher, a man whose thoughts are influencing public opinion. He is a very prosperous man; he is making money and reputation. (179)

The effect of the present tense not only shows his growth in the process of the narrative, but suggests the continuing influence of Franklin's life upon late nineteenth-century Americans by making his presence more immediate and dramatic.

Franklin's goodness and benevolence continue, for "in the midst of his prosperity Silence Dogood was constantly seeking out inventions to help people" (179).

When he was about thirty-four years of age, in the Poor Richard days, he saw that the forests were disappearing, and that there would be a need for the people to practice economy in the use of fuel. (179-180)

Prompted by a concern worthy of a Yankee heir, Thoreau, Franklin invents a stove which will heat large areas with little fuel.

The name of the Franklin stove added very greatly to Poor Richard's wisdom, in making for Franklin an American reputation, which also extended to Europe. His fame arose along original ways. Surely no one ever walked in such ways before. (180)

Franklin's originality and wisdom somehow in turn reflect that of America, the colonial leader representing and embodying the course of a nation whose fundamental beliefs and citizenry have broken new ground.

Proof of Franklin's inventiveness continues with a discussion of his electrical experiments and theories. Even Franklin's practical joking takes on moral importance in Butterworth's retelling of anecdotes. With some of Franklin's electrical apparatus, a charge of static electricity could be developed within a willing individual. On one occasion a young woman wanted to be "electrified." Later, a male acquaintance kissed her in public, demonstrating a great amount of impropriety. As they kissed, they "received a shock that caused [them] to leap and bend double, and to utter a piercing cry" (188). Butterworth follows this anecdote with a warning to all who would kiss indiscreetly, especially in public places.

Next comes the chapter, "The Great Discovery," where Franklin establishes his eminence as a scientist. Disregarding any accurate chronology of ages, Butterworth depicts Franklin out with his son William (who would have then been twenty-one) flying kites, an activity they had often engaged in for pleasure. Now "Father Franklin" proposes to his son that they perform an important experiment together. As a thunderstorm gathers, the two wait patiently for lightning to strike the kite. At the point where both almost give up in despair, a flash strikes and a corresponding surge of electricity travels down the string. "'Lightning is electricity,' said Silence Dogood" (195) as he verifies his hypothesis.

While many of the events Brooks chooses to highlight in this period of Franklin's life are similar to those Butterworth discusses, the emphases between the two biographies grow quite different. Brooks continues to give greater stress to the qualities of Poor Richard which have been a staple to the image from the beginning, but he does so with his own distinctive variations. As Benjamin works at the printing trade in Philadelphia, the same representative character traits guide his actions as they have in the past. Brooks tells us that the sign, "B. Franklin, Printer," grew to be the most well known landmark in the

city, and that the "name stood for good work, honest work, reliable work; for Franklin had learned that in business, as in everything else, 'honesty is the best policy'" (65).

Furthermore,

"There are no gains without pains," said Franklin. "He that hath a trade hath an estate, and he that hath a calling hath an office of profit and honor; only," he added, "the trade must be worked at, and the calling well followed, or neither the estate nor the office will enable us to pay our taxes." (65)

Rather than merely providing an appendix of Poor Richard's proverbs, Brooks integrates them into the text to reinforce certain elements of Franklin's life, especially the importance of one's vocation and willingness to work.

Franklin's work as a printer leads to a discussion of his almanac writing and the importance of *Poor Richard's Almanack*. In addition to printing a newspaper and magazine,

regularly, for twenty-five years, he made and printed an almanac that did more to educate his countrymen to habits of industry, economy, independence, and manhood than anything else in America. It was called "Poor Richard's Almanack," and it is acknowledged to have been one of the causes and stepping-stones toward the Declaration of Independence and freedom of America. (65)

From such statements we not only see the remnants of the Protestant work ethic (industry and economy), but the continued influence of competitive capitalism, which results in "independence" and "manhood." These ideologies, put forth in Franklin's almanac, serve not only to secure liberty (having forged the American character that won the Revolution), but come to typify the United States itself.

Interested in showing Franklin as the prototypic American, Brooks makes mention of Franklin's blissful marital relationship. Ignoring the difficulties that undoubtedly arose from long separations, Brooks simply states, "For forty-four years they lived together as husband and wife, helping one another along the road to success and riches, and setting the world an example of real home-making and home-happiness" (66). Given their domestic harmony, we are not surprised that the virtues of Poor Richard reign within the household, for "it was no wonder they saved money, got ahead in the world, and at length became rich

and comfortable. They were never mean nor small; they were simply saving, industrious, and clever" (67).

Developing a period of Franklin's life most authors briefly summarize, Brooks elaborates on the Philadelphia years between the initial return from London and his beginning work in politics. Focusing on his success as a printer, Brooks characterizes Franklin as a laboring gentleman, an image extending back to Weems and to a degree Franklin himself. As an active printer engaged in his trade, Franklin is the ideal businessman.

Franklin wore his leather apron in shop and store; he wheeled home the goods he bought, made his own lamp-black, mixed his own ink, and where other printers tried and failed, he tried and succeeded. (67)

Extrapolating wise counsel from the successful printer, Brooks tells us

his advice to other men was--these are his own words: "Employ thy time well, if thou meanest to gain leisure; and since thou art not sure of a minute, throw not away an hour." That was good advice, was it not? (68)

Despite this characterization as a hard-working, ingenious Yankee, Franklin exhibits the qualities of a true gentlemen, maintaining the best of both the old and new order.

Benjamin Franklin, even when he wore his leather apron, made lamp-black, and mixed his own ink, was always a true gentleman. He knew what was right and just, and he did that, and only that. (71)

The continued mention of the leather apron, an artisan symbol, represents a willingness to work hard. For Brooks and others, one of America's greatest accomplishments is the ability to combine the general ethic of industry with gentlemanly honor and manners. So great was Franklin's skill at balancing these at times conflicting ideologies, that "all men looked up to Franklin as a great success in business as well as in manhood" (73).

In an attempt to place competitive capitalism in perspective and avoid too great an emphasis on wealth, Brooks qualifies his explication of money-getting with some of Franklin's own words, stressing wealth as a means of accomplishing much good.

But money does not make the man, and money was not what Franklin thought the most of. "A wise man," he said, "will desire no more than what he may get justly, use soberly, distribute cheerfully, and leave contentedly." He worked hard for his money in order that he might make the best use of it, and he did. (73)

Financial independence allows Franklin to be of service to others and to spend his time in productive enterprises; "he was always busy thinking up some wise or useful or helpful thing--something that would help men and women either to live or to do" (73).

Brooks also attempts to show Franklin's moral fortitude by integrating his plan for moral perfection into the narrative. Using much of Part Two of the *Autobiography*, Brooks tells how Franklin recorded in a little book how well he lived certain virtues--temperance, orderliness, industry, sincerity, cleanliness, and so forth. Each day "he would go over this list, just like a bookkeeper in a store, and put a check against such of the 'virtues' as he had not followed out" (74). Devoid of any of the irony or humor in Franklin's own telling or his admission that perfection was most likely an impossibility (perhaps a "speckled axe" is best), Brooks' version indicates that the book was kept religiously until Franklin mastered each trait. Then, tying the plan back to his audience, Brooks asks,

How is that, boys and girls? Do you think you could keep such an account with yourselves, and cure yourselves of bad habits by putting them down in black and white until you had figured them down to nothing? Just try it once and see. (74-75)

As always, Franklin proves a worthy model for readers to emulate.

Spurred by the mention of temperance in Franklin's list of virtues and driven by the need to show that even in weakness he accomplished great good, Brooks tells of the London days, when even in his weakest moments the "Water American" who was "sowing his wild oats, . . . would sandwich some good between his careless acts" (75). The resolute Franklin is shown influencing for good those given to imbibing while strengthening those who are attempting to live temperately. Brooks stresses that his young advocate's ability to get fellow workers off the bottle improved their health and saved them money. This in turn leads to another discussion of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, stressing the

need for improving one's life and surroundings. From self-improvement the topic turns to the organization of the Junto, which Brooks sees as one of the first societies formed to promote the welfare of its members. Citing the Junto as one of America's first mutual improvement associations, Brooks lists the various questions members asked one another at their regular meetings, questions which stressed the importance of education.

From Franklin's position of influence in Philadelphia, Brooks next shows his expanding role in colonial affairs, his financial security allowing him to devote more time and attention to political and civic matters. Brooks creates a figure of the man who excels in every endeavor and who naturally becomes a leader for others to follow. We are reminded of how naturally he led the boys in building the stone wharf in Boston, of how he was head of his spelling class at school, of his expertise as an apprentice printer, and of his crucial role in saving his brother's newspaper. Almost everyone seeks Franklin for advice on important matters. Because of his great ability with people and his uncanny intelligence and common sense, the state assembly appoints him clerk or secretary to the legislative body, a position he held at age thirty. This in turn leads him to public service as a trustee of the city school, a justice of the peace, and a member of the state legislature, a position Brooks tells us he was reelected to ten different times. "All these honors," the author reminds us, repeating Franklin's statement, "came to him unsought" (85). When he secures the position of postmaster general for the colonies, Brooks comments, "That was getting ahead pretty well for the candle-maker's son, --don't you think so?" (88).

As the colonies enter in to the French and Indian War, Brooks sets up Franklin for his first opportunity "to save his country." Brooks describes the various circumstances surrounding the war, and tell us that "the British colonies in North America in those days needed men of brains and will to help them over the rough places. They were having many hard times" (88). Franklin, as one such man, becomes instrumental in organizing a militia for the protection of Philadelphia, effecting a compromise between the pacifist Quakers and the proprietors. Naturally, the men of the militia elect him colonel, and he helps build forts

and procures cannons for protection. During this time he proposes the Albany Plan for the uniting of the Colonies, a plan accepted in America but rejected by the English Parliament, who respond, "it would never do to let the colonies unite. Some day they might get so strong they would wish to govern themselves, and that we will never allow" (95). Crediting Franklin with originating the idea of a union and the prototype for the Constitution which would be adopted, Brooks reminds us "what came later. For Benjamin Franklin's plan of American union is now a part of the government under which we live" (95).

One benefit of this early war, according to Brooks, comes as the colonies realize their power and the leadership they possess. Emerging from the war as significant forces in American leadership are George Washington and Benjamin Franklin, who become "Fathers of the Republic" (99). These leaders proved invaluable in the fight against the French and Indians, particularly in comparison to the inept leadership of the English General Braddock, who we see as brave but foolish. At a critical point in the war, Franklin procures supplies and men for Braddock and enlists the aid of Pennsylvania farmers in the conflict. Convinced of Franklin's integral part in the war, Brooks depicts Franklin as having a far more active and important role in the war than he in fact did. While George Washington is to have saved the army, Franklin's advice and active involvement appears every bit as crucial.

[A]nd when a new army was gathered for the defense of the threatened Pennsylvania colony from the dreaded French and Indians, at its head marched its new commander, brave General Benjamin Franklin--for he was a general now.

He drove the Indians off; he forced the French to the border; he built forts; he made the Pennsylvania border safe. . . . (99)

While the men want Franklin to lead them to Ohio, he returns to Philadelphia to work with the colonial assembly. Feeling that the English Parliament is acting at times contrary to the needs of the colonies, the assembly sends Franklin to England, for "there was only one man who could do this. You know him--Benjamin Franklin" (101). His indispensable

work during the French and Indian War then becomes "how he saved his country for the first time."

Turning next to his scientific work, Brooks tells us how the hero of the book becomes "Dr. Franklin." His interest in science came naturally as he strove to spend his time engaged in useful activities. "I don't believe he ever wasted a moment," observes Brooks, "and yet he got as much fun out of life as the laziest lord in Europe . . ." (104). Much of Franklin's "fun" came from his experiments and inventions, Brooks mentioning how he measured the velocity of waves on ocean trips, invented the Franklin stove, and studied one of the most dangerous sciences, electricity. "But in the interest of science Franklin was ready to take risks--and he did" (107). With this context Brooks sets the famous kite experiment, being more interested in dramatic story than the historical reality. Brooks shows Franklin and his son William (whom he calls "Billie") retiring to the country on a stormy day.<sup>2</sup> The location is chosen not because of the possible interference of buildings and individuals in the city, but because Billie fears some girls may see him and make fun of his kite flying.

The boy and his father persevere through a wild storm, and at the point where they are about to give up, success comes.

He touched his knuckles to the hanging key.

Zip! came a spark, tingling and stinging. Zip! Zip! came another and yet another as he knuckled the key again and again.

"I've proved it, Billie," he said triumphantly to his son. (113)

This experiment, along with this invention of the lightning rod, proves in Brooks' mind to be the most significant scientific work of colonial America. Because of the success and importance of his work, Franklin receives honorary degrees from Harvard, Yale, and Oxford.

Thus he became Doctor Franklin. Thus, at fifty, Benjamin Franklin, the candle-maker's son, the runaway apprentice, the hungry, friendless printer, --who had left school at ten, and whose only education had been what he had taught himself, --found himself renowned by the great schools, societies, and colleges of Europe and America, receiving from them honors

that princes could not attain, but which really honored those who gave even more than it did him who received them. (115-116)

Certainly Brooks' high esteem for Franklin remains evident as the traditional juxtaposition of his humble beginning contrasts the later achieved eminence, a renown so great that more honor goes to the bestowing schools than to the scientist himself.

From his scientific and political work prior to the Revolutionary War, both biographers turn to the events surrounding and following the conflict of 1776 and follow the life of Franklin up through the time of his death, though Brooks provides a much more extensive treatment of these years than Butterworth. The ending section of Butterworth's biography continues in an episodic and anecdotal manner reminiscent of Weems.

Anecdotes such as Franklin at the signing of the Declaration of Independence, saying to those signing and to the Colonies in general, that "if we don't hang together, we will surely hang separately," continue to suggest his prominence in colonial events. Focusing on selected events to show Franklin's diplomatic work, Butterworth resorts to his own imagination in creating the context for the Revolutionary War. At one point Mr. Calamity returns when the future of the Colonies looks bleakest. But the aged patriot resists any discouragement and continues to be identified with the more radical revolutionaries like Sam Adams, who willingly tear down the King's Arms and declare independence. As the "Minister Plenipotentiary" goes off to France during the war, a conversation with his sister Jane suggests the continued familial duties he maintains, as well as the lingering influence of his early mentor. As the brother and sister make their good-byes, the diplomat says, "Jenny, I must go. When shall we meet again? Not until I have put Uncle Ben's name to the declaration of American liberty and independence is won" (253).

Franklin's greatness and influence continues as even the old Scot, Jamie, who initially thought Benjamin would not amount to anything, now sits contentedly reading the popular story of the old auctioneer (*The Way to Wealth*) and unreservedly praises the greatness of this American proponent of practical wisdom. Following the traditional method of proving Franklin's greatness, a lengthy list of his many accomplishments

concludes the account, wherein Butterworth uses the Biblical exclamation in commanding this great American; "we may truly say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant'" (308). Ending with the fictitious creation of Weems, Butterworth, in his abbreviated version, tells us that Franklin "died looking upon a picture of Christ, and he was buried amid almost unexampled honors" (309). Butterworth ends by attempting to show Franklin's enduring influence by recounting the many things which have been named after this early leader, from cities to banks to an honorary medal of achievement. Then, suggesting the importance of Poor Richard to the greatness of the life just told, Butterworth includes the full text of *The Way to Wealth* in an appendix, the inference clearly being to go and do likewise.

The maxims of Poor Richard continue to remain a significant part of Brooks' biography as well. To prove Franklin's wisdom and the degree of learning derived from his self-education, Brooks provides numerous Poor Richard maxims which focus on self-help and learning. In suggesting the importance of *Poor Richard's Almanack*, Brooks links it with the Bible and refers to it as having the same canonized authority as scripture.

In hundreds of humble homes in America, as I have already told you, but two books were known or in daily use, --the Bible and "Poor Richard's Almanac," and from both, fathers and sons and mothers and daughters learned to depend upon God and upon themselves for help, for strength, and for character. (118)

Brooks then connects the reading of Franklin's almanac to the independence of America, quoting an authority he never identifies (presumably Parton) to give added weight to his claim.

Indeed, one historical writer tells us that the battles of the American Revolution could not have been fought between 1775 and 1783 if "Poor Richard's Almanac" had not been published from 1732 to 1758. The people had been schooled by him to endurance, patience, manliness, economy, and helpfulness. (118)

Even in the early almanac writing, Franklin is seen as a key figure in America's struggle for independence and subsequent greatness.

The linking of *Poor Richard's Almanack* to the success of the American Revolution provides the starting point for a discussion about patriotism and Franklin's place as an ideal citizen. Placing the independence issue in the frame of master/slave relations, Franklin's work helped "emancipate" the tyrannized colonies.

Others followed where Franklin had led. With his words as a text, they talked to the people; and their arguments and appeals set alight the flame of liberty, which grew stronger and brighter as the "masters" in England became more obstinate and tyrannical.

Then, at last, the flame burst into a mighty blaze that lighted the path of America to union, to independence, and to greatness, and gave to the world so bright a beacon light of liberty that kings and princes heeded the warning; and to-day liberty and justice live in all lands because of America's story. And this advance of the people was largely due to the wisdom and the teachings of Dr. Benjamin Franklin, philosopher and patriot. (119)

America, and in turn by inference Franklin, has liberated all the world's captives, particularly those of the lower classes, undermining the aristocratic system in favor of freedom and opportunity for all.

Brooks then takes us to England as Franklin faces Parliament and fights the "tax tyrants." On one occasion when questioned by Parliament concerning taxes levied against the colonies to support the mother country's war with France, Franklin speaks so forcefully and eloquently that he "instructed England and thrilled America" (128). Six days after Franklin's convincing arguments, the Stamp Act is repealed, and "America went wild with joy. Bells rang and bonfires blazed. It was a great victory for justice and right, and Benjamin Franklin was hailed in America as deliverer and champion" (137). Surprisingly, Brooks mentions Franklin's conciliatory gestures with England, his desire to see the colonies reconciled with the crown. But Franklin soon "began to see through the king" (139) and recalls the tyranny of his brother during his youth, a relationship which produced an "aversion to arbitrary power all his life" (139). Consequently, he becomes an advocate of independence. With Parliament soon levying new taxes, obviously supported by the king, "Franklin found that his appeals and his arguments were of but little use. More than this; he began to experience once again in his life the insolence of tyranny" (144-45). After

seeing that no more is to be done in England--"You might as well beseech a bull-dog to give up a bone" (157)--Franklin returns to Philadelphia, and as Brooks observes, "Not one of the patriots of the American Revolution, whom we now revere and esteem, had at that day made a name or could show a record at all approaching that of Benjamin Franklin" (158).

As the patriot returns home, Brooks reports that everyone exclaimed, "With Franklin in America . . . the lovers of liberty have no need to fear" (158). With the Continental Congress in session, Franklin becomes actively involved in the affairs of state, serving as a member of ten committees. According to Brooks, Franklin became an earnest advocate of rebellion, not exceeded in fervor by John or Samuel Adams, Patrick Henry, and others. Among other things, Franklin is one of five chosen to "draw up and present to the Congress the immortal Declaration of Independence" (166). Retelling the familiar anecdote about the signing of the Declaration of Independence wherein Franklin is to have said that the colonies need to hang together or they would hang separately. Brooks exclaims, "Franklin [then] signed his name with a flourish as great as his delight" (170), evoking John Hancock's well-known gesture.

As the events of the Revolution are set in motion, Congress realizes the need for Franklin's services in France, and the statesman is off to "save his country a second time." Just prior to his departure, however, Franklin performs an act that further testifies in his fervent belief in America. He gathers all his money from investments and lends it to the hard-pressed Congress. "That showed his faith in the cause. That was patriotism" (176), remarks Brooks. Moving through a fairly cursory discussion of Franklin's activities in France, Brooks summarizes the importance of his diplomacy in behalf of freedom.

So, you see, if it had not been for Franklin's presence in France, and the way in which he acted and attended to his country's affairs, the French alliance, upon which so much depended, and which really hastened the successful close of the Revolution, might never have been arranged. His work in France, and the ends which he accomplished, really gave independence to America; and thus he saved his country a second time. (183)

According to Brooks, Franklin truly brought hope to the cause of liberty and to America in its darkest days.

Even at the war's close as he prepares to return home, Franklin continues his amazing productivity and influence. Commenting upon this foremost American's age and his return voyage to the States, Brooks says,

You would think that, old, sick, and weary as he was, Franklin would have simply rested during the homeward voyage. But he couldn't. His health improved during his travels, and this wonderful old man put his spare time to good accounts in observing and improving things. (196)

Not only does Franklin study transatlantic currents, but he continues to write, composing three important papers during the voyage. Finally, the elderly gentleman returns to America, coming full circle like the mythic hero to the place of his important beginning.

At last the voyage was ended; and on the fourteenth of September, 1785, Benjamin Franklin, the great American, landed in the midst of a shouting and jubilant crowd of his welcoming fellow-citizens, at the very same Market Street wharf in Philadelphia upon which, sixty-two years before, he had landed poor, homeless, friendless, and seedy, a runaway apprentice boy, alone in the world. Is there a prince in all your fairy tales, or a hero in all your story-books, whose romance can equal this true and wonderful story of Benjamin Franklin? I know of none. (196-197)

Given his own creative additions to and synthesizing of the Franklin story, Brooks' biography, whether he realizes it or not, is an equivalent performance to the fairy tales to which he refers.

But the story is not yet over. Franklin has yet to become President of Pennsylvania as well as "save his country for a third time." Feeling it a crucial time in new state of Pennsylvania, given the struggles to be encountered, the people unanimously elect Franklin governor of the state, a position then called President. In fact, reports Brooks, "he was elected by every vote save one, and probably that was his own" (199-200). Of course, he serves as an exceptional president, as

his wisdom and moderation smoothed down the political rivalries and jealousies of the opposing parties. . . . Under President Benjamin Franklin the state of Pennsylvania was peaceful, prosperous, and happy. . . . He was one of the benefactors of his race, one of the makers of America. (201, 202, 209)

And yet Franklin had still one more important mission to fulfill. After quoting part of Longfellow's "Morituri Salutamus," a poem about old age and usefulness, Brooks commends readers to look at the entire poem and think

how Benjamin Franklin, at eighty-four, did one more deed to add lustre to his glorious name, and to show to others the way for the United States of America to raise the thirteen stars off the flag of the Union, as he knew it, to the forty-five that crown its blue to-day. (210-211)

The glorious deed which Brooks refers to involves the creation and ratification of the Constitution. "The Constitution," says Brooks, "adopted by the fathers of the republic, and under which we live in security to-day, has done all [that] for which it was made" (214). This has come in large part because of the presence of Washington and Franklin, without whom the convention "would either have made no Constitution at all or made one which the States would have rejected" (214). Indeed, Franklin's "wise explanations, witty remarks, and sensible suggestions, as he talked and argued with his fellow-members, led them to see things in a clearer light, and to accept what, otherwise, they might have fought against" (216).

Of particular importance is Franklin's proposal concerning representation in Congress, suggesting that each state have equal representation in the Senate with proportional representation in the House according to population.<sup>3</sup> In Brooks' opinion,

This not only solved the question of representation, which was in dispute, it also smoothed down all jealousies and, so it is claimed by historical and political students, saved the Union, which all desired, but about which all could not agree. So, once again you see in his long and useful life, did Benjamin Franklin save the country. (220)

Quoting a noted Franklin scholar, John Bigelow, to provide further testimony of Franklin's importance, Brooks concludes with the following:

It is not too much to say that to Franklin, perhaps more than any other man, the present Constitution of the United States owes most of those features which have given it durability, and made it the ideal by which all other systems of governments are tested by Americans. (223)

Indisputably, in the mind of Brooks, Franklin did more for his country than anyone who has ever lived. Consequently, he ranks as the greatest American to have ever lived.

Brooks ends *The True Story of Benjamin Franklin*, like Butterworth, with Franklin's final days and, ironically, the most inventive anecdote of the century (and farthest from the truth): the Weems deathbed scene. Franklin's only regret as his death approaches is that he cannot once more visit his boyhood home of Boston. As a result, he establishes a workman's fund to provide assistance to beginning tradesmen as well as creates an honorary medal to reward scholastic achievement in Boston school boys. Despite a lingering illness, the dying man stays busily engaged, even drilling his granddaughter in her spelling lessons, for "sick or well, it was not possible for this busy old man to rest. He simply could not keep still or stay idle" (235). To once more impress upon the reader the greatness of this founding father, Brooks summarizes and recapitulates what Franklin "did for the freedom and glory of his native land; how, three times, he saved it from destruction, defeat, and anarchy; and how he gave his life for over sixty years to its service" (236). Brooks provides a catalogue of over fifty items--ranging from inventing bifocals and lightning rods to the founding of a library and fire company --Franklin did for "the comfort, convenience, and bettering of all mankind. It is a long list," observes Brooks, "no other man ever did so many things" (236).

One surprising inclusion in Brooks' list of Franklin accomplishments is the organization of the first anti-slavery society, with the suggestion that Franklin stands as the country's first abolitionist. Referring to a resolution Franklin introduced into Congress condemning slavery, Brooks sees it as having tremendous significance.

So Franklin had been, all his life, an "Abolitionist"; and when after the Revolution, men began to discuss and talk about the abolition of negroe slavery, he was an interested and earnest supporter of the measure. It took seventy-five years to bring it about, and remove from the fair name of the great republic the blot of slavery. But it is well to know and to remember the fight against it began with Benjamin Franklin, the Boston boy, the Philadelphia printer, the apostle of freedom. (242)

Brooks indicates that Franklin was elected president of the first anti-slavery society in America and authored, just prior to his death, the first petition to Congress to abolish slavery.

Having credited Franklin for almost every significant event in colonial American history, and some which would come years later, Brooks brings the biography to an end. Feeling the need previous biographers had felt to show Franklin as a professing Christian, Brooks integrates the fictitious deathbed incident into his own description of the great American's death.

"A dying man can do nothing easy," he said. These were his last words; and at eleven o'clock on the night of April seventeenth, 1790, with his eyes fixed upon a framed picture of Christ, -- "the one," he said, "who came into the world to teach men to love one another," -- the loving, great-hearted, wise old philosopher and patriot closed his eyes in the world forever. Benjamin Franklin was dead. (247)

Reflecting then the dominant theme of American nationalism and Franklin's representativeness, Brooks writes that his exemplary life and accomplishments were so great that "he wrought himself into the history of his native land; and that land will never forget him" (247).

In a final attempt to establish Franklin's undisputed greatness, Brooks quotes various nineteenth-century Franklin scholars, successful and well-respected men in their own right, to provide additional testimony to his claims. Quoting John McMasters, Brooks tells us that no more interesting or "uniformly successful American" (247) has ever lived. "No American," he continues, "has attained to greatness in so many ways, or has made so lasting an impression on his countrymen" (247). Brooks observes that no one other than Franklin has a face as recognizable as Washington's. Moreover, Franklin's maxims are in the mouths of everyone and his name continues to be remembered all over the country, evidenced by cities, counties, streets, societies, and corporations named after him.

Franklin was in truth the greatest American then living; nor would it be safe to say that our country has, since that day, seen his like. . . . Self-taught, self-reared, self-made, the candle-maker's son gave light to all the world; the street ballad-seller set all men singing of liberty; the runaway printer brought the nation to praise and honor him. (249)

With Franklin emerging as a redeemer-figure ("a light to the world"), Brooks ends his biography with a final charge to his readers.

And to you, boys and girls, I have told the story of his long, busy, eventful life. May it be to you all and inspiration to endeavor; for, with Benjamin Franklin as an example you can never aspire too high, or hold in too much esteem the love of liberty, of country, or mankind. (250)

In these final two biographies of the nineteenth century, one fiction, the other nearly so, the fully mythicized image emerges, a figure destined to dominate public opinion thereafter. Impeccable and infallible, Franklin's life and wisdom provides an example to all Americans who wish to enjoy happiness and success in life. Eclectically borrowing elements from previous biographers and writers, Butterworth and Brooks make the final adjustments to an image and story of enormous import, solidifying Franklin's place as the foremost American. Through the various emphases and additions to the life story accruing over the century, this prototypic American takes his place not only as one of the founding fathers, but as the father of American business, science, diplomacy, and morals. Though later critics debunk this mythic creation, his centrality to American values continues to perpetuate his popularity, insuring an enduring name and standard by which subsequent attitudes and ideologies continue to be measured.

### Notes

1. Charles L. Sanford in "An American Pilgrim's Progress" (*American Quarterly* 4 [1954]: 297-310) develops the connections between Franklin's *Autobiography* and John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, parallels which were evident and exploited by such nineteenth-century authors like Mayhew and Butterworth.

2. The mythic dimension of this single event is in itself a fascinating study. Though the exact date of the experiment is unknown, Franklin's first published account of it comes from an October 19, 1753, article, "Electrical kite," appearing in his own newspaper, the *Gazette*. This experiment, along with his theoretical writing on electricity, brought him international fame and numerous honorary degrees. Hyperbolic descriptions, such as Kant's appellation "the new Prometheus who had stolen fire from Heaven," added to the reverential regard given him in connection with the event. No doubt Brooks crafted his mythic depiction as a result of such adulation. A corollary mythic representation of the event can be seen in an early nineteenth-century painting by Benjamin West titled, "Franklin drawing Electricity from the Sky." West shows America's foremost scientist and kite-flyer as a seasoned patriarch flying the kite with his son William, depicted as a young lad by his side. In reality, Franklin was a middle-aged man of forty-six, his son, twenty-one. The painting, reproduced and discussed in Charles Coleman Sellers' definitive study, *Benjamin Franklin in Portraiture* (New York & London: Yale UP, 1962), also has robust

cherubs hovering around in reverential awe, with one even holding up the kite string to which the charged key is attached.

3. Carl Van Doren, in his biography *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Garden City Publishing, 1941), provides a detailed discussion of Franklin's activity in the Constitutional Convention. Franklin's presence, like Washington's, served primarily a conciliatory purpose, the advanced age and waning health preventing the former from taking too active of a role in the proceedings. Franklin was on the committee to devise a compromise for the question of representation, one of the most troubling issues to gain any consensus concerning. According to Luther Martin, delegate from Maryland and fellow member of the compromise committee, Franklin made the motion to the committee of the idea of a dual legislature, one branch (the House) having proportional representation with the other branch (the Senate) having equal votes per state (Van Doren 749).

## CONCLUSION

As the bicentennial of his death approaches, it seems only logical to ask what perceptions we now have of the multifaceted man named Benjamin Franklin and to see how our views of him differ, if indeed they do, from those held by preceding generations. Similarly, in light of this study's focus, we might ask ourselves of what importance is the nineteenth-century image of this colonial American Prometheus and how does it currently relate to us. Hearing as I have a middle-aged mechanic or an entering college student argue that America could not have won the War of Independence without the aid of Franklin's diplomatic maneuvering in France or listening to the grammar school teacher tell how Benjamin captured lightning from thunderclouds to provide us with all the modern conveniences we now enjoy, one cannot doubt that the myth of Franklin is still very much alive and with us. On a more basic level, anyone who believes in what we call the American dream of success, of educational opportunity, employment, home ownership, and the like knows that the presence of America's foremost "poor boy who made good" is near.

While the scholarship of the last thirty years has done much to demythologize this most representative man, in many ways his heroic aura persists, as well as many of the fabricated stories and events surrounding his life. As I have noted, as late as 1935 the fallacious Weemsian account of Franklin's Christian death appeared in the conclusion of Helen Nicolay's *The Boy's Life of Benjamin Franklin*. Nicolay tells us that Franklin's maid remembers how Franklin recalled and quoted the words to several hymns by Watts in his final days, speaking of their solace and beauty. Furthermore, says Nicolay, a minister who called upon him tells us that a picture of the crucified Christ hung where he could see it, and, indicating it, Franklin said, "That is the picture of one who came to teach men to love one another." (326)

Not to be outdone by previous myth-makers, Nicolay concludes that "on his gravestone [was] cut the epitaph that he had written at the age of twenty-three" (327), ending then with the text to the lines reprinted.

As recently as 1961, the reverential deference so characteristic of nineteenth-century assessments is seen continuing in a January 21 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine claiming to have been founded by Franklin himself. In "The Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin," author Samuel Eliot Morison touches on almost every aspect of the mythic image presented by biographers like Butterworth and Brooks. An introductory description tells us that in the article, which is "a famous historian's revealing portrait," that as "statesman, scientist, writer and philosopher, this most versatile of Americans never forgot his earthy origin" (21). Beginning with the characteristic Franklin/Washington comparison, Morison shows Franklin the better man for his sense of humor:

Many great men in history have had little or no sense of humor, and George Washington was one of them; but Benjamin Franklin, the most versatile genius in American history, not only had a sense of humor but was one of the few people who could get a laugh out of George. (21)

Morison continues his assessment in the article with his own brand of pithy aphorisms, almost adopting a Poor Richard-like style in his describing the early American hero: "Ben Franklin set the pattern of the American success story"; "Ben was as American as clam chowder and johnnycake"; "Franklin never made much money, but was generous with what he had, and a public benefactor"; "A great man by any standard, Franklin was a universal genius, great in a variety of ways--as a printer, philanthropist, statesman, man of science; as naturalist and humanist, and writer"; "He talked with English and French statesman as an equal; yet he was as homely and comfortable as an old shoe"; "It was because he loved people so much, that he hated war so profoundly" (76-77).

In a characteristic passage, Morison assumes an intimacy with his subject as well as with the reader in portraying the commonness as well as typical Americanness of Franklin.

Franklin's secret, the thing that "made him tick" and pulled every aspect of his mind together, was his love of people. Not people in the abstract, like

Karl Marx, Henry George and other dreary prophets of progress, but people in particular, and of all kinds. . . . If you had been a young man in 1776 calling on the great ones of the day, you would have been overawed by George Washington, and Sam Adams you would have found rather grim; Alexander Hamilton would have made you feel very stupid, Patrick Henry would have made you a speech, and John Adams would have talked your head off. But old Ben would have made you at home. He would have asked after your parents, and probably known them, or at least about them; he would then have asked you about yourself, drawn you out and sent you away with some good advice, a warm handclasp and a smile you would have remembered all your life. (76)

Then, in an ironic afterthought to this chummy description (most likely missed by many readers), Morison remarks, "The same would be true if the visitor were a young girl, especially a pretty one" (76). A century earlier an Elbridge Brooks or Mason Weems could hardly have been more unreservedly adulatory than Morison.

Similarly, literature for children has continued as laudatory, perpetuating the mythic make-believe quality characteristic of the turn of the century. Spencer Johnson begins his narrative of Ben Franklin, *The Value of Saving, The Story of Benjamin Franklin* (1978), in the traditional fairy-tale manner with no pretense or apology: "Once upon a time in the days when our country was still a British colony, a little boy named Ben Franklin lived in Boston with his mother and father" (7). Focusing on the *value* of saving, Johnson ties most all of Franklin's successes to the cardinal virtue of frugality, which in part encompasses the other values of industry and honesty in the story. Like the more fictional narratives of the nineteenth century, Johnson uses invented dialogue, as well as a preceptor who often provides guidance to Ben when crucial decisions are about to be made. Johnson, however, substitutes a more fanciful mentor for Mayhew's Uncle Ben: namely, Benny the Penny. We meet Benny in the context of Benjamin's early inventiveness, which, as we have previously seen, typifies his later accomplishments.

One day, when [Ben] was eight years old, he said to himself, "I'm going to have some fun. I'm going to invent a way to save time so I'll have more of it."

When he finished his invention [described as a "Time-Saving Swimming Machine" in the text], Ben set out to show it to his friend Tom. On the way he saw a rich man drop a penny in the street.

"Sir!" cried Ben. "You dropped your penny."

"Why so I did," said the man. "You're an honest boy. Just for that you keep the penny."

"Thank you, sir," said Ben. "I'll keep it and save it, so that I'll have it when I need a penny for something important."

"That's a wise idea," said the man, and he went on his way. (7-8)

Then, reminiscent of Aladdin's lamp, Ben rubs the penny and feels its cool smoothness.

Flipping the coin in the air, he exclaims, "You're a special penny. I may decide to keep you forever" (9). As the coin flips, something magical happens, and a smiling face appears on one side. The coin then introduces himself to his young owner, "Hi there, Ben. I'm Benny the penny!" (10).

A fast friendship ensues, and Benny continues as Franklin's faithful companion throughout his life, witnessing and aiding in such events as his Boston apprenticeship, his self-education, his success in Philadelphia as a printer, his invention of the Franklin stove and bifocals, his writing of *Poor Richard's Almanack* (with the prominent "A penny saved is a penny earned" dramatically printed on a picture of the almanac), and his signing of the Declaration of Independence and instrumental role in the Revolutionary War. Through it all, Benny remains a trusty helper and guide, even pictured in a three-cornered hat and bifocals on the concluding page, as the author ends with a final charge to young readers:

In spite of his fame and riches and success, Ben continued to find happiness in saving time and money and energy.

Because of Ben Franklin, many people today know the value of saving, so much so that many institutions like banks and insurance companies and even colleges are named after him.

Perhaps now you may want to think about what would make you happy. You may want to start saving things that are important to you. (60-61)

The continued twentieth-century perpetuation of this mythic image, however, has its flip side. Many early twentieth-century writers reacted violently against the figure of the man the previous century had fashioned. In *A Literary History of the American People*, Charles Angoff blames Franklin not for inventing but making a religion out of parsimony and fanatical practicality. Disagreeing with Carlyle's assessment of the colonial leader being the father of all Yankees, Angoff objects that this is "libel against the tribe, for the Yankees have produced Thoreau, Hawthorne, and Emily Dickinson" (305). Rather,

argues Angoff, "It would be more accurate to call Franklin the founder of all the Kiwanians" (305).

Echoing Angoff's charge of spiritual sterility and a similar disaffection with the materialism of American culture, D. H. Lawrence provides the most stinging attack against "Old Daddy Franklin," whom he sees as the "the first down-right American" (9). Lawrence, familiar only with a narrow side of Franklin at best, reacted against what he saw as "the most repellent qualities in American life--the fondness of Americans for the willful manipulation of their own behavior, their devotion to business and money-getting, their prurient desire to perfect the world" (Seavey 60). "The perfectibility of Man!" decries Lawrence. "Ah heaven, what a dreary theme! The perfectibility of the Ford car!" (9). Lawrence, like a host of other anti-Franklinists, react not to the living, breathing reality of an eighteenth-century colonist and American. Rather it is the image of that man, refashioned to fit the exigencies of succeeding ages, that they so violently oppose.

It is my contention that this figure of Franklin, both the image anti-Franklinists denounce and the neo-Franklinists continue to promote, came not only from a limited reading of selective texts like *The Way to Wealth* and the *Autobiography*, but from nineteenth-century popular literature in general and nineteenth-century juvenile literature in particular. As authors carefully crafted a hero to reflect the dominant ideologies and needs of their era, their resulting efforts produced a man with little resemblance to the historical individual. Though Robert Miles concludes in his 1957 article on the changing image of Franklin with the assertion that "it is hard to imagine a matter more vital to the student of American civilization than an appreciation of the *authentic* Benjamin Franklin (143, emphasis added), it seems unlikely that the "real" man will ever be located behind the varying masks of his own creation and the subsequent transformations of later writers. Even modern biographers intent on showing Franklin as he was not as others perceived him, fall prey to the moral issues surrounding Franklin's life. Esmond Wright in his 1986 biography *Benjamin Franklin* claims that

we who have suffered from politicians' unbridled and undisciplined slogans have less sympathy for the similar and equally flatulent extravagances of *littérateurs* or of debunkers. Only now has it become possible to see the rounded man as he was, and to assess him, good or ill, virtuous or backsliding, warts and all. (viii-ix)

But despite his prefatory remarks, Wright takes a defensive sympathetic view of Franklin, finding in him "a rational man who only just curbed his animal nature" (ix), a kindred spirit to the late twentieth century.

Today Franklin worshipers and detractors alike persist in touting their image of the man in defense of their tenaciously held positions and ideals. One of the reasons for Franklin's enduring popularity comes from his ability to be all things to all people: wise, witty, pious, frugal, industrious, narrow-minded, mean, benevolent, petty, manly, meek, or a host of other things, depending upon the exigencies of a given situation. In 1728 as a young man, Benjamin wrote an epitaph which, while never engraved upon his headstone, exists as one of his best known short writings. The epitaph closes with Franklin affirming his belief that he would

... appear once more,  
In a new & *more perfect* Edition,  
Corrected and amended  
By the Author. (*Writings* 91)

While "the Author" has most often thought to be God, certainly biographers and critics of Franklin's life have seen fit to "correct and amend" this famous American's image for "new and more perfect" editions, a phenomenon nowhere more evident nor more influential than in nineteenth-century children's literature. As we look to Franklin as a rule to measure changing attitudes and ideologies, whether old or young, rich or poor, common laborer or rising sophisticate (just as past centuries have done and succeeding ones will no doubt persist in doing), we will find that Benjamin Franklin continues, in no small way, a man for all ages. Undoubtedly, the correcting and amending will go on.

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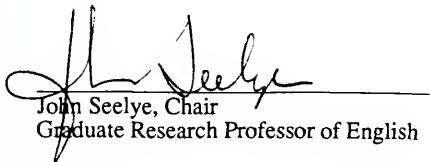
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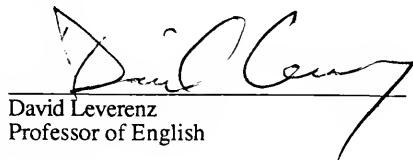
Karl Lyman Smart was born in Provo, Utah. After receiving B.A. (1982) in English and English education at the University of Utah, he taught junior high school for one year before returning to work on his M.A. in English at Utah State University. After taking his M.A. in 1985, he moved to Gainesville, Florida, where he has been working on his Ph.D. for the last four years. Specializing in American literature to 1900 and children's literature, he will graduate with his Ph.D. in May 1989.

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



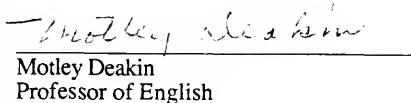
John Seelye, Chair  
Graduate Research Professor of English

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David Leverenz  
Professor of English

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Motley Deakin  
Professor of English

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John Cech  
Associate Professor of English

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.



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Jack Zipes  
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This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Department of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and to the Graduate School and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

May 1989

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